



In This Issue:

- What To Do Before the Vet Arrives for An Emergency
- Environmental Allergies
- Happy Show Season!

Happy Show Season!

Show season is in full swing! Here at SEVS, we love supporting the local equestrian community through sponsorships. We recently sponsored the Saanich Shows in the Sun 3' Children's Hunter Division and the VIHJA Benefit Show 3' Children's Hunter Division.

Our very own Dr. Kaitlin McDonald has been taking her young mount, Roux, through the local competition circuit and we're so proud to see her out there jumping on the grass field! We hope all competitors have been having a successful 2024 show season & good luck for their future competitions. A big congratulations is extended from the entire SEVS team for all those who have competed in our sponsored divisions!



Photos: (Left) Dr. Kaitlin McDonald showing Roux (credit: Mane Frame Photography). (Middle & Right) Champion in Swiftsure sponsored Children's Hunter division: Graffiti and Teia Fennell, Reserve Champion: London Fog (Charlie) and Kate

Environmental Allergies



It is the time of year that we are seeing many horse suffering from hives and/or are so itchy, they are rubbing out their manes and tails and injuring their bellies. The most common causes for allergies at this time of year are insects, pollens and weeds. Insect allergies, often referred to as "Sweet Itch" can be attributable to the bites from *Culicoides* sp (No-See-Ums). But can also include other insect allergies including flies, mites etc. They don't even necessarily need to be biting insects - horses can have allergies to the body parts of ants! Pollen from trees, weeds, flowers etc germinate at different times almost year round. Many of these pollens travel up to a 75 km radius, so your horse does not need to be in close proximity to these pollens to react - it just needs to reside somewhere on South Vancouver Island. This makes management very difficult and more often than not, allergies tend to progressively worsen with age.

So what can you do about it? Medications such as antihistamines can be helpful IF started before symptoms develop, a month before is best practice. Once symptoms have begun, we usually turn to steroids and/or Apoquel as treatment options. Insect repellents, shampoos, topical ointments and creams, blankets, fans and keeping horses indoors at dawn and dusk can also be helpful, but usually these strategies are inadequate.

The next step is immunotherapy. Customized immunotherapy helps the horse's immune system to recognize these allergens as 'normal to the system' which then desensitizes the immune system and curbs its reaction. Initially horses are tested to determine which families of allergens they react to; often symptomatic horses are allergic to dozens of allergens, not just one or two. Desensitization immunotherapy is then implemented. The good news is that in horses, as compared to dogs, cats or humans, response rate is approximately 75% and occurs within 6-12 months. Moreover, they are finding that approximately 30-50% of horses will eventually become fully desensitized such that they no longer require any treatments, while for others it's a life-long therapy.

Please contact the office for more information.



IT'S AN EMERGENCY! What to do before the vet arrives:

So you've called the vet for an emergency and the vet is on their way out. What do you do before they arrive?

In General:

- Have your horse caught, wearing a well-fitted halter, either safely tied in a level place where the vet can examine them, or in a clean stall or small enclosure.
- Bring the horse as close as possible to where the vet truck will be parked. This is very helpful as a vet will often have to go back and forth to their truck in an emergency situation
- Do not administer any medications unless the vet has specifically instructed you to do so
- Keep the horse's environment as calm as possible. Limit the number of onlookers. Even the most calm horse is still a prey animal, and has a fight or flight response. This is enhanced when they are stressed or painful. The less people around and the less noise the better.
- Provide light, (warm) water and electricity. Vets will almost always carry some supply of each, but it is helpful if the horse can be led somewhere with access to light water and electricity or if they are brought to the horse if it is immobile.
- If you are prepared to take your horse to a hospital, (if it is determined the necessary action after their exam), start making trailering arrangements preemptively.

Colic

- Do not offer any food unless the vet has specifically advised.
- Make note of most recent manure consistency, amount, frequency, recent water consumption and when the horse was last fed.
- Walk the horse if instructed by the vet but don't exhaust them. Give them time to rest. It's okay if they lay down. Contrary to popular belief, rolling will not "twist their gut". However they can injure themselves if frantically rolling, so ideally reduce the likelihood of them going down, but don't place yourself or anyone else in a dangerous position in trying to prevent them from rolling. Ideally avoid placing them in an enclosed space or on hard ground.



Laceration

- Send the vet photos. They are very helpful in triaging wounds. Having clipped and cleaned around them before taking photos is also helpful. Avoid creating shadows over the laceration(s).
- If there is profuse bleeding and you can do so safely, put firm constant pressure on the bleeding area, by hand or using absorbent bandages until the vet arrives. If the blood seeps through the bandage, apply more bandage material overtop, do not remove the original bandage.
- Cold hosing is almost always beneficial, for both cleaning initial contamination and reducing swelling. On the phone your vet will triage if the laceration is close to a joint and may advise to you not cold hose, particularly if you're on well-water.

Down horse

- Keep the horse as calm as possible.
- Don't offer them food but make sure they have water within reach, particularly if it's going to take the vet time to get there.
- If they're in the sun, make shade.
- Gentle, firm attempts can be made to encourage the horse to stand before the vet arrives, as the less time a horse is down the better.
- If it is safe to do so, flip the horse to the opposite side using ropes. Do not place anyone in harm's way.

Choke

- Choking in horses is not like choking in people, horses will not suffocate as their obstruction is in their esophagus. Many chokes clear on their own, but still let your vet know right away.
- Keep horse away from food and water, do not offer anything in their mouth.
- Make sure the horse can put its head down to expel feed coming from its nose.
- You can gently massage along the underside of the horses neck where the esophagus travels as this may help break up the feed obstruction.

No matter what, while you wait, don't start to panic. Panicking is not useful. Emergencies are stressful, and generally time-sensitive, but remaining as calm as possible for both your horse and vet will always be beneficial.