
TAREE VETERINARY HOSPITAL

MARCH NEWSLETTER

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If drought were not bad enough, looking after what stock you can keep depends on food and water, and this month we've seen both with problems.

Bree had a case of kikuyu toxicity this month in dairy cows. I think this is a condition that is nearly impossible to predict. The cows are mostly found dead, but will be seen to sham drink although they are dehydrated, then go down, and be full of fluid on post mortem. The toxin is not fully understood but it is probably a fungus on stressed then rapidly growing kikuyu. Everything looks stressed to me at the

moment. It may even be possible that the toxin can be in kikuyu hay.

Hay fed in drought conditions can also contain toxic nitrites from toxic plants and millet, prussic acid if made from immature sorghum and its varieties, and weeds.

And then there's botulism. Only a tiny amount of toxin, usually derived from an animal carcass wrapped up in silage, can kill many cows and horses. Any sort of silage, including pit, is potentially toxic. Vacuum wrapped hay bales have also contained botulism. Chicken litter can also be toxic, but if it has been washed in and several weeks have passed it will be safe. However, botulism can be prevented by vaccination in cattle.

We tested a water sample for blue green algae which was positive for the toxic varieties. They don't test for the actual toxin, because the algal blooms can become toxic very quickly and a negative toxin result may allow toxic water to be drunk. All stock, even dogs, can be poisoned.

Sorry, that was all very doom and gloom. Next month will be better.

Cattle Diseases of the Month
calvings
eye cancers and pink eye
lamenesses
Akabane calf
buffalo fly but no 3 Day yet

And in the Horses.....

This month we have had two horses with tendon sheath infections subsequent to small wounds. Punctures are often the worse wounds because bacteria are deposited under the skin, which can find a home in a tendon if deep enough, and as tendons have relatively poor blood supply the infection can take off. Even with bacterial culture and immediate antibiotic treatment, and drainage, it can be difficult to cure the infection.

We are getting close to weaning time and now is the time to assess whether umbilical hernias need to be repaired. The degree of difficulty depends on the size, measured by how many fingers you can put into the hernia. The hernia stays the same size as the horse grows, so it becomes relatively smaller. One and two finger hernias can be left alone or ringed and pinned. Three finger and above generally need surgical repair.

Foals are vaccinated now for tetanus and strangles if indicated. Two vaccinations four weeks apart confer years of protection. Hendra vaccination can be done as early as four months old.

Foals should be wormed for good growth, health and to prevent colic, but when? Mostly from 2 to 3 months old, but it depends on the number of horses there are and how often the mares are done. Then there are factors such as pasture management and parasite resistance. Have

the wormers been rotated? The best way is to bring a faecal sample in and we do a test on it to establish if worms are there.

Horse Diseases of the Month

colics

weight loss

cuts

Qld itch

lamenesses, including a suspensory tear

arthritis in a knee in a stock horse

RUN DATES FOR MARCH

LANSDOWNE.....THURS 1ST

OXLEY/MITCHELL'S IS.....TUES 6TH

HANNAM VALE.....THURS 8TH

DYER'S CROSSING.....TUES 13TH

WINGHAM.....THURS 15TH

LORNE/COMBOYNE.....TUES 20TH

COOMBA AND THE DEEP SOUTH....THURS 22ND