



Are you feeding your horse illegal drugs?

Immediately I must say that this will not apply to 99.9% of Guernsey horse owners! However, with the increasing use of specialised concentrate and feed supplements this is theoretically possible. If your horse competes under the rules of certain governing bodies such as the FEI or the British Horse racing authority where strict testing protocols are in place, you could be breaking the law.

Nutritional and feed supplement companies are sourcing food materials from all over the world and quality control can be poor. Nutritional products are often extruded and concentrated from original products and can lead to increased concentrations of certain banned substances.

Interesting examples of 'medicines' that can be found in plants are salicylates (aspirin group) from the Salix group of plants (willow is one), DMSO, another anti-inflammatory, from alfalfa and nervous system stimulants such as bufotenine from phalaris grass.

Probably more concerning is where crops have been contaminated by weeds. Solanaceous plants (including potatoes and nightshades) contain atropine. Henbane, Jimson weed and Datura contain other stimulants of

the heart and nervous system. These may be harvested along with the prime crop.

Morphine contamination from poppies is another potential problem. Racehorses in 2002 in the UK and Eire were found positive for this medicine. Northern poppy species can also contain another banned opiate, codeine, which humans happily take as a cough syrup!

If you feed your horse chocolate so you are giving it another banned substance, caffeine and theobromine (a cardio respiratory stimulant). Your horse is more likely to get these substances from cocoa husks that historically were used as bulking agents in horse feeds. Although there has been no comprehensive survey of contamination of equine dietary supplements, a similar survey for human products found a 20% contamination with prohibitive supplements!

There is a belief that herbal supplementation is safe and in moderation most are, but in excess they can be toxic. French racing industry has developed a test for the anti-inflammatory herb Devil's Claw which may become a banned substance. So remember, many nutritional supplements based on herbal ingredients contain substances that have direct effect on your horse. Check with your vet if you suspect you are feeding your horse prohibited substances.

Jimson weed could be a contaminant



Contact us

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Does your horse measure up?

It may be time to get your horse a new height certificate. BSJA rules require accurate measurement of horses competing in certain classes which must be undertaken under the direction of the 'Joint Measurement Board'. You may have a life height certificate (which can be issued over seven years and after two measurements) but otherwise you may need an



annual certificate to compete.

Measuring a horse requires removal of shoes, trimmed hooves and the animal to be in a relaxed state. Identification documents will be checked and the measuring process usually takes half an hour.

All horses and ponies to be measured must have a microchip implanted. If the horse or pony does not have a microchip then it must be implanted prior to measuring at an additional cost. Further details can be found on our web site at www.isabellevets.co.uk.

Are digital X-rays readily available in Guernsey?

YES they are and they are available here at Isabelle Vets.

Many of us have become used to the idea of digital cameras and photos. The latest x-ray technology is exactly the same. It allows your vet to change the definition of the x-ray and concentrate on areas of clinical concern. It is faster to process, and the images are stored electronically with your horse's records for future viewing.

We have invested £30,000 in an Agfa CR30-X radiology system. The principal benefit of digital radiography is higher quality images. This allows for improved diagnostic capability ,

permanent storage and burning to CD disk for easy transportation.

This cutting edge facility is easy to use and non-invasive for your horse and allows for excellent quality images to allay your fears or confirm damage to bones and joints.

X-ray of a horse's hoof



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Open to all horse owners in Guernsey who register with us before 31.3.09. Just send us an email with your name, address and horse's name to vets@isabellevets.co.uk. Good luck!

Winter dust coughs: explaining a 'foreign body' allergic reaction

In summer, pollens may cause allergic broncho-alveolitis but unfortunately you may not be totally rid of respiratory problems in winter. COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), induced by fungal particles in hay and bedding, can be a problem.

Thermophytic (warmth loving) fungi live in poor hay and bedding and develop spores that become aerated with movement and inhaled by the horse. These spores are usually only a micron (a millionth of a metre) in diameter and they are just the right size to pass down to the bronchioles, the lower air tubes of the horse's lungs. Some horses will develop a 'foreign body' allergic reaction, causing spasms of the muscles around the tubes, constricting and narrowing them and producing a thick mucus.

The air passage is greatly restricted and leads to an increasing effort to breathe. Performance drops and it can lead to permanent and irreversible lung damage. Some horses develop 'heaves' or 'broken wind', the old fashioned terms for dyspnoea (the difficulty to breath with the chest 'heaving' to inhale oxygen).

Prevention is better than a cure. Here are a series of minor management tasks which can limit COPD:

- Have a well-aerated stable. Ideally there will be a venture updraft through an open roof light as well as good through stable ventilation. Air movement is essential and as long as it is above the horse's withers this should cause no problem.
- Choose your hay well. Good quality hay will still have fungal spores in it but they will be greatly reduced. If necessary, feed from the floor rather than from hay nets. You may have to soak the hay. Thus should be done for one to three hours. Soaking is effective because the water absorbs into the spores by osmosis and causes them to burst, changing their size and nature. Consider feeding HorseHage if your horse is already affected.
- Bedding must not be allowed to become damp and stale. This allows the reproduction of the fungal spores. Good 'mucking out' technique twice daily is important. Use top quality wood shavings or auboise.
- Clean ceilings of cobwebs as they can harbour dust.
- Listen for coughing and count the horse's respiratory rate. Athletic thoroughbreds may breathe only eight times per minute. Older ponies may be twelve to fourteen times per minute. Faster than this, when at rest, may indicate a breathing problem.

If you have a concern speak with your vet, as early medication can save long term distress.

