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March 2018 Newsletter

Let's Talk About Ticks

It's only the beginning of the year and we're already seeing them. Horses are standing out in the pasture shaking their heads, and then won't let you touch their ears when previously they've never had a problem. Bring them into the vet, and it turns out the horse has ticks in their ears. Numbering anywhere from one or two ticks to several hundred, these little buggers are extremely irritating to horses, not to mention the fact that they can spread disease.

There are two types of ticks that infest the ears of horses: The Gulf Coast tick, which infests the pinna (the inside part that you can see), and the Spinose tick, which chooses to attach in the ear canal. Both of these ticks cause severe irritation, and can cause bacterial infections to take root in the skin which then need antibiotic therapy. While for the most part we see them from April to June, we've often picked them out of ears as early as February, depending on the winter.

The best method of treatment for horses with ticks is to remove the ticks. Many times, this requires sedation because the horse is so reluctant to have their ears touched. An otoscope is often required to look down inside the ear canal to be able to identify the Spinose tick and remove it, as it cannot be visualized from the outside. If the ticks have been present long enough, anti-inflammatories like bute and antibiotics that work for skin infections are used to calm the swelling and irritation in the ear and get the horse more comfortable. Sometimes it's even beneficial to clean the ear with an ear cleanser to remove some of the debris left behind by the ticks.

Obviously, preventing ticks is one of the best things you can do for your horse to avoid the whole issue. Products labeled for horses that contain permethrin are going to be your best bet to prevent ticks. Be wary because some of the permethrin products may need to be diluted as they can burn the skin if applied full strength. When applied correctly, these products can last up to a month or more. It's important to remember that even if applied correctly, outside conditions like rain and sweat can wash away the product, so you may need to apply it as needed. There are also products that can be applied to the legs of horses, to deter ticks from even climbing on board.

If you notice that your horse has suddenly gotten head shy, or have any questions about treating or preventing ticks, please call your veterinarian for a consultation.

Make sure to get pregnant mares pre-foal vaccines done. Check for current coggins before trail riding weather. Remember if you cross a state line you are required to have Coggins and Health papers.

Castration Signs: March 9th thru 16th 2018 (weather permitting)

Are You Ready!!!

Pre Foal Vaccines for Preg Mares /Foal Kits

Coggins up to date for spring travel

Teeth and Yearly Vaccinations

Worming and Fecal