



THAL EQUINE

Offering Quality Veterinary Care for Horses in Northern New Mexico

DOUGLAS THAL, DVM and CHASE KOHNE, DVM
SUMMER/FALL 2004

To Our Valued Clients and Friends,

I hope this letter finds all of you having a happy summer. We're sending out another newsletter to keep you up to date on the exciting developments within our practice. Thal Equine continues to grow and expand and is now the largest and best equipped equine veterinary facility in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado.

We have some new staff members. Many of you have met Dr. Chase Kohne. He is a skilled veterinarian and we are very pleased to have him with us. He has adjusted well to life in northern New Mexico and is happy here.

Beth Farrow joined the practice as office manager, and is a great addition, as is Kelly Dobbs, our new receptionist at the Taos clinic. Our loyal staff of Cindy Medina, Brook Vincent, Ruth Bourgeois, and Brenda Engle has worked hard this spring and summer to ensure that everything flows smoothly and in a positive direction. I am very grateful for the effort contributed by this group of people. With all these staff members working as a team, we are able to fulfill our mission of providing you with excellent health care for your horses.

We have some exciting new diagnostic and surgical equipment which expands the services that we can offer you even more. See the "What's New" article for details.

There are some very important topics covered in this newsletter. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns about these or any other issues

If you are one of our regular clients, we appreciate your business very much. We would not be here if it weren't for your support. If you haven't used our services for a while, we welcome your calls. We look forward to hearing from you.

*Doug Thal, DVM and staff of
Thal Equine, LLC*



Our new scope is a 3 meter (9 foot) video system that allows us to visualize the inside of the equine stomach. With this device, we are able to diagnose gastric ulcers in horses that have chronic colic or other signs compatible with this common problem. We are one of only a few practices in the state with this capability.

WHAT'S NEW AT THAL EQUINE?

Gastric ulcers and our new three-meter video gastroscope

Gastric (stomach) ulcers are a very common cause of low-grade colic, weight loss, poor coat, poor performance, and behavioral changes.

Gastric ulcers are especially common in stabled performance horses. *The non-prescription drugs available from feed stores and mail order are not effective in helping healing of gastric ulcers.*

If you suspect that your horse may have this problem, or you have any question about this common condition, please call the office.

Video Arthroscopy

We have purchased a video arthroscopy system. We now join the ranks of only a few equine veterinary practices in the state that can perform arthroscopic surgery.

We can remove fracture fragments, clean up injured joints, and make joint diagnosis by direct visualisation.

The most common indication for

arthroscopic surgery is race horse carpal (knee) chip fractures, but joint fractures and arthritis are common problems in all disciplines.

We will provide competitive prices on arthroscopic procedures.

Customized health care plans for your horses

We want to provide solutions for the varied needs of the horse people in our practice area. Discuss your needs with us and we'll help you formulate a preventative health plan. We will provide you with both the services and the products you need to take the best care of your horses at a reasonable price. We will give you the guidance to make good decisions on care for your horses.

Fill out our questionnaire found on our website and we'll give you management suggestions. We are committed to providing the best possible products at the best possible prices. If you find a lower price, we will meet it if at all possible.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE WATCH

We feel that it is important to keep you up to date with what is happening with equine infectious disease in our region

West Nile status

We are still expecting West Nile to return to our area this year. If patterns from other areas are any indication, we can expect fewer cases than last year. As of today's date, there have been no equine cases reported in New Mexico, although there have been human cases. The pattern has tended to be that areas that are especially hard-hit one year tend to be less hard hit the following. Why this happens is not known for sure, but there are likely several factors. Bird immunity and improved immunity in the equine population are thought to be important factors.

Birds are an intermediate host for the virus and are probably involved in this pattern. Infection of human or horse occurs this way: An infected mosquito bites the host bird (a magpie, jay or crow-like bird usually). The virus multiplies within this bird and reaches a high level. Another mosquito bites this bird and is infected by the high level of virus in the blood. This mosquito then bites either a horse or human, and this individual is infected. The horse or human is called a dead end host because the virus does not multiply to a high enough level in the blood to infect another mosquito that would bite this individual. Therefore, the disease is not carried horse to horse or horse to human.

It is thought that maybe the bird population experiences immunity after widespread exposure in a bad West Nile year (like last year). Because of their immunity, birds bitten by an infected mosquito do not experience the multiplication of the virus. It is controlled by their immune system. There is not a high level of virus in the bird's blood as there would be in a bird with no immunity. The mosquito that bites this immune bird is not infected and the cycle is broken.

Another factor is widespread vaccination of horses. In addition, many horses may be exposed to the virus but show no signs of disease. It's possible that these horses may have some immunity the following year. Much of the equine population has been vaccinated, but there are still many that have not.

Our recommendation is to prepare for the worst. Here are some things you should do:

1. Insure that your horses are vaccinated properly. (They should have gotten the initial series of 2 vaccines spaced 3 to 6 weeks apart, and been boosted earlier this year with a single vaccine.)
2. If your horses have not been vaccinated in the past, they need the 2-shot series as soon as possible. They will not have immunity until at least 10 days after the second injection.

3. If they were vaccinated last year but not yet this year, you should get it done as soon as possible.
4. Vaccine protection begins to fall off after 6 months. For extra protection, consider giving a booster every six months during mosquito season.
5. Use common sense in trying to keep mosquito breeding areas to a minimum. Clean water troughs regularly. Use fly sprays and mosquito repellents to keep mosquitoes off your horse and yourself, especially at night.
6. Remember the signs of West Nile virus (unsteady, wobbly gait, weakness, muscle tremors which are often especially noticeable around the face). Successful treatment is dependent on catching the disease early, so call right away.
7. The Fort Dodge vaccine is about 95% protective. The disease is generally more mild in vaccinated horses if they do contract it.
8. There is a second vaccine available- made by Merial. This is called Recombitek. It offers some advantages over the Fort Dodge product. Call for details.

Vesicular Stomatitis: What is it and what's its status?

Horses in New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado are experiencing an outbreak of Vesicular Stomatitis Virus. The signs of Vesicular Stomatitis are usually ulcers and blisters of the mouth, lips and tongue

VS is thought to be spread by direct contact with saliva of infected animals, as well as by biting insects. The precise means of spread is not known. VS is generally not a very serious disease in horses, but the lesions are often very painful and can cause difficulty in eating.

What makes this a problem is not the seriousness of the disease, but the fact that it is a reportable disease. The disease is very similar in appearance to Foot and Mouth Disease, which is a greatly feared and economically important disease in the livestock industry. For this reason, the government takes VS very seriously. VS is a reportable disease, meaning that government vets must get involved. Premises that have confirmed VS are quarantined for 30 days after the resolution of lesions and clinical signs. This is despite the fact that virus shedding (contagiousness) is usually limited to the first 6-7 days after exposure.

In our practice, we have seen most of the cases in the Penasco area and in the villages along the high road between Espanola and Taos. We have also seen cases near Las Vegas. This is as of July 30, 2004.

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS

- Horses are more susceptible to infection than other livestock species. Vesicular Stomatitis is transmissible to people and generally causes flu-like symptoms and not serious disease.
- Pastured horses have a much higher rate of disease than stabled horses. It is unclear why this is but may relate to exposure to the infecting insects or to grazing itself.
- Usually 20%-30% of horses in a group will show signs of disease.
- Horses less than one year of age have a lower incidence of infection than older horses.

What you should do if your horse shows signs of VS

1. Call your veterinarian if you see suspicious signs in a horse (salivation or ulceration of mouth, lips or tongue).
2. If VS is confirmed, your premise will be quarantined by the state vet until 30 days after the last sign of disease on the premise. This means that there will be no movement of animals into or out of the premise.
3. It is important that a **veterinarian** see horses showing signs. Other problems may mimic VS and it is important to tell the difference between these. Sharp seed heads can cause oral ulcers. Certain toxins and blister beetle toxicity from hay can as well. As of now in Northern NM, a horse with ulcers and blisters on its muzzle, lips and tongue has Vesicular Stomatitis until proven otherwise.
4. Understand that there is no vaccine, and there is really no treatment, other than time. This is usually not a very serious disease. The real problem is from a regulatory standpoint. If your horses cannot eat or drink, supportive nursing care may be necessary. In the event that your horses are not eating or drinking, please call right away.
5. Practice good fly control, both during the day and evening. Stable horses as much as possible to reduce chance of infection.
6. To prevent spread of disease, disinfect tack, equipment and premises that have come into contact with affected horses. Use 1:10 bleach and water sprayed on all surfaces. Let stand 15 minutes and rinse. Wear gloves when handling animals affected by the disease. Wash hands and arms with disinfectant soap following contact with affected animals.
7. Keep in mind that this disease can be transmitted to people, although the signs are usually mild, so use good common sense to avoid this.
8. We expect VS to be a problem into the early fall. Cooler weather should break the cycle of infection.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU BEST?

10 ideas for working well with your equine veterinarian

1. Call us right away if you have a problem with your horse.

We can guide you in the decision of whether or not we need to see him or her. We are always happy to help you over the phone if we think it's possible. We are available for emergencies 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

2. Lameness issues.

If your horse is lame the best thing you can do is call right away and discuss it with us. We can help advise you of the best approach.

3. Performance problems.

My horse won't perform the way I expect he should.

While many problems may be behavioral, there are often underlying health problems, especially lameness, that result in poor performance. Call us if you have questions about your horse's ability to perform.

4. Dentistry.

We offer a range of dental services, from routine maintenance to corrective procedures.



5. Preventative medicine.

Let us educate you in your options for care. Then let us help you design a preventative medicine program that fits your needs. See our web site for details.

7. Try to keep in touch with us following your visit.

There is rarely such a thing as a magic bullet cure. Problems always require follow up. Remember, our goal is to help you get the best result with your horse. We can only help you if you let us know you have a question or problem.

8. Call during office hours if possible.

People sometimes watch a developing problem all day. It doesn't seem too bad, and then it worsens at 5 PM on Friday evening. You are better off calling when you first notice a problem. Put us on alert.

9. Coggins and health certificates.

Give us a call at least a week before you need the paperwork. We can have results overnight but it is much more stressful on everyone involved (and more expensive). On holidays, the labs are closed and test results will take longer to be completed, so be sure to plan ahead.

10. Tell us what your needs are, and we'll help you solve them in a sensible and affordable way.

Discuss management with us. We can get you on a program of affordable horse health care through us. We offer everything from comprehensive health care programs to just providing vaccines and wormers at competitive prices.

6. ALWAYS CALL IMMEDIATELY FOR THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS:

- a. **Colic.** Even if you have banamine or other drug, call and let us know that you are having a problem. This way, we can help advise you on the best course to take. We will probably ask you to give the banamine, and will help you make a decision as to whether or not this is enough or whether your horse needs to be seen. We can also plan so that you do have service if and when you need it. We are now a colic surgery facility and can perform those services if needed.
- b. **Foaling problems.** If you have a question about a foaling mare, don't waste time. Call immediately. We can always tell you that it's nothing to worry about.
- c. **Eye problems.** They can result in blindness if not dealt with properly and right away.
- d. **Severe lameness.** Failure to call about a severe lameness can be the difference between a sound horse, or loss of use or even death. This includes a horse that is resistant to move, or acts "stiff."
- e. **Wounds** - especially those causing lameness, near the eye, or lower down on the limb. Often the worst wounds are small wounds low on the limb near joints, tendons, and tendon sheaths. Another good rule of thumb is "If it's causing lameness it should be seen by a vet." Almost every day, someone calls the office and describes a wound on the trunk, head or upper limb and I tell them how to treat it without my seeing it. I tell them what to do and what to watch for. It all starts with a call!
- f. **Horse is wobbly or unstable.** This can be a neurologic problem (brain or spinal cord) and must be seen right away. It could progress quickly to the horse being down and not being able to get up. West Nile and sleeping sickness can present like this. It is critical to call right away and institute the proper treatment.
- g. **Horse is off feed.** This is a very common problem. If a horse doesn't want to eat its usual food, there's something wrong. Don't wait. CALL.

FALL SPECIAL - OCTOBER 15 to DECEMBER 31

INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- Brief Veterinary Check-up Dental Exam Deworming Vaccinations

If your horses are up to date on Encephalitis, tetanus and West Nile, the recommended fall vaccination is for influenza and rhino. Which vaccines are used depend specifically on your needs. Talk to us about this.

REASONS TO DO THE FALL SPECIAL:

1. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR HORSE'S HEALTH.
2. IT IS COST EFFECTIVE.
3. **INCLUDES A BRIEF VETERINARY CHECK-UP AND A DENTAL EXAM.** We will answer any questions you have as we examine your horse. Finding problems early saves you money in the long run. **A Thal Equine dental exam is thorough: each tooth is visualized and felt if needed.**
4. **WE USE ONLY SUPERIOR QUALITY PRODUCTS.**

CALL THE CLINIC to set up an appointment or for more information. Discounts are given for 5 or more and for 10 or more horses at a location.

SPRING/SUMMER CLINIC HOURS: 8-5 M-F, 8-12 Sat. 24-HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE. PHONE: 505-737-5322.

2004 FALL SPECIAL

Service	Cost (1)	Cost 5 or more
Fall Special #1 – Routine: Flu/rhino, deworming with Ivermectin spray, brief exam, dental exam	\$53.50	\$48.50 each
Fall Special #2 – Intra-nasal flu, Rhino vaccination, deworming with Ivermectin spray, brief exam, dental exam	\$63	\$59 each

Deworming options – Ivermectin spray included in specials. If you choose Equimax paste or Quest Plus for tapeworms, add \$8.00 to above prices.

While we encourage you to have us examine your horses as part of the fall special, we will dispense vaccines at competitive prices. We also have other vaccines available. Call us for details.

SURGERY AT THAL EQUINE

We have been performing colic surgery here for about 18 months. Our emergency team is equipped to deal 24/7 with these intense cases. We also do other routine abdominal, orthopedic and soft tissue surgery.



For more detailed information on VS see our website at www.thalequine.com or call the clinic.

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