

# 2 0 0 7 F A L L E D I T I O N

## McKEE-POWNALL EQUINE SERVICES

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### ✧ *McKee-Pownall Equine Services* ✧

Well, despite the summery weather, fall has arrived and the show season is drawing to a close. Congratulations to all who enjoyed a safe and successful year and to those who qualified for year-end championships and awards. There are many exciting new developments at McKee-Pownall that we are eager to share, as well as important information on horse care, infectious diseases, new products and upcoming events.

#### **West Nile Virus**

Reports from Ontario and Manitoba indicate a resurgence of the West Nile Virus. There have been more human cases reported in 2007 than in the last few years. On August 30, local news reported that mosquitoes trapped in Georgetown and in Milton were found to be carrying the virus and experts warn that August-September are the peak transmission times. The good news is that horses in the McKee-Pownall preventative care program are fully up to date on their annual West Nile vaccinations and we have not treated a single case of the disease this year. The news report on August 30 confirms that we must stay vigilant and continue to booster the vaccine each spring when mosquito season begins.

#### **Rabies**

A recent bulletin issued from OMAFRA warns of an increase in the number of rabies cases in Southern Ontario this year. This emphasizes the importance of regular rabies vaccination, as horses are routinely exposed to commonly infected wildlife species. Be sure to notify your local animal control if you see any unusual behaviour in a wild animal.

#### **Beet Pulp**

Several articles in equine publications have advised that dry beet pulp is a safe feed for horses. As veterinarians, we heartily disagree with that statement! Although beet pulp is an excellent feed choice for horses, the importance of thoroughly soaking the pellets cannot be overemphasized. While the common misconception is that the dry pellets expand in

the stomach and cause colic, the real danger occurs during consumption. Dry beet pulp pellets absorb tremendous amounts of fluid and can develop a sticky coating when first in contact with moisture. When the horse chews and swallows the material, it can stick to the lining of the esophagus (throat), causing a blockage. When stuck in the throat, it continues to absorb the secretions that normally lubricate food as it passes to the stomach, causing a serious case of choke. In addition, it starts to expand in size, which compounds the problem. Our most severe choke cases are almost always related to the consumption of dry beet pulp. Even if we successfully clear the obstruction, there is a risk of pneumonia and pressure damage to the esophagus in prolonged cases. Please be sure that this feedstuff is thoroughly soaked before giving it to your horse! We also invite any who disagree with this article to wear our pagers for a few days- it will definitely change their mind!

#### **Elisha Dickenson**

We are excited to welcome the newest member of the McKee-Pownall Millbrook team, Dr. Elisha Dickinson. Elisha is a 2006 graduate of the Atlantic Veterinary College in Prince Edward Island. As a student, Elisha was active in the New Brunswick Standardbred industry in aspects of both sports medicine and reproduction. Following her degree, she completed an internship at an extensive equine referral and surgical centre in New Jersey, which is the same practice that Dr. McKee interned with. Elisha's veterinary medical interests are in lameness, reproduction,

neonatology and emergency medicine.

#### **Continuing Education**

This summer, many of our vets took time out of their busy schedules to pursue advanced training and continuing education. Dr. Lindsay Colwell and Dr. Maggie Turner attended the AAEP session on in-depth lameness. Dr. Michelle Courtemanche and Dr. Colwell had hands-on experience imaging soft tissue and joints at the AAEP ultrasound wet-lab. Congratulations to Lindsay on another successful year as team vet at the North American Young Riders Championships in Virginia. Patti Priestman, practice manager at our Millbrook and Newmarket locations, also attended an AAEP seminar on improving the quality and efficiency of our services. Dr. Kristen Buchanan attended a full course on embryo transfer this fall, in anticipation of offering this advanced reproductive technique at the Millbrook clinic. In addition, Dr. Buchanan upgraded her lameness and reproductive skills at the Florida Association of Equine Practitioners meeting in September. Dr. McKee and Dr. Pownall will attend the annual AAEP general meeting in December, as they both serve on committees for the organization. While there, they hope to catch up on new techniques, compare experiences with colleagues and examine new equipment and medications.

#### **Teeth, Deworm, Dental**

Don't forget that it is time for the pre-winter check-up, especially for older horses and those with particular medical problems. The cold weather is especially hard for

our geriatric patients, and those that suffer from arthritis, respiratory, and hormonal diseases. Now is a good time to have a dental exam, check your deworming schedule, and make sure your "winterizing" plans are set. Dentistry is a special focus of many of our veterinarians. They continue to pursue post veterinary college education in this field and are well prepared for both routine and specialized equine dental needs.

### What is the Value of Veterinary Dentistry?

We have recently become aware that laypeople are offering cut-rate tooth floating services in local boarding stables. Although this seems like a cheap way to address your horse's dental maintenance, there are several issues that need to be clarified in this situation. In Ontario, it is illegal to perform dentistry on a horse without veterinary supervision. Certain individuals have been sent to jail for failing to respect this law. Lay dentists do not perform a thorough oral examination, do not use a speculum to visualize and give access to the rear teeth, do not use sedation to ease anxiety and smooth the process, and do not give any pain control when it is needed. They are not trained to identify and safely treat dental abnormalities. They cannot prescribe drugs to treat oral infections, or take x-rays of the jaw when indicated. They cannot perform extractions, or if they do, no sedation or nerve blocks are performed beforehand. If anything should go wrong, most horse insurance policies will be void because the procedure was not performed by a veterinarian. The veterinarians at McKee-

Pownall have a special interest in dentistry and actively pursue continuing education on the subject. We are often "second in" on horses that have been given hand floats, and typically discover many deficiencies on proper examination. Hand floating done by unqualified individuals may seem like a good way to save money, but can have damaging consequences for your horse's health and well being.

### New Products

Many of you have asked about "Polyglycan", a new arthritis medication that is available on the American market. This product is similar to a combination of hyaluronic acid and Adequan, and is given intravenously on a regular basis to promote joint health in equine athletes. It is legal and does not drug test. This may be of benefit to horses that routinely get Adequan or Legend treatments during the show season or for lameness problems.

### Evening Hours

For those of you who are unable to meet the vet during regular daytime hours, limited evening appointments will be available at both the Campbellville and Newmarket locations. Please contact your local clinic for more details.

### Dr. Andy Clark

We are pleased to announce that McKee-Pownall has created a terrific opportunity for local veterinarians to spend a day of learning and inspiration with Dr. Andrew Clark. Dr. Clark,

originally an equine veterinarian, is the Chief Executive Officer of Hagyard Equine Medical Institute. This veterinary hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, is one of the largest in the world and employs 60 veterinarians. Dr. Clarke has a special interest in practice management and brings a wealth of knowledge on the topics of improving the quality of practice and developing new associates to ensure the continuity of excellent care and service.

### Winter Client Education Day

Stay tuned for details on our annual client education days this winter, just after the holidays. We will cover topics based on your feedback from the last seminar series. The Campbellville/Newmarket education day will be Saturday January 19 at the Albion Bolton Community Centre, and the Millbrook education day will be Saturday February 23 at the Millbrook Lions Community Centre. More information on topics and speakers will be available on our website [www.mpequine.com](http://www.mpequine.com) and in future mailings.

Continuing education for clients is a major focus for McKee-Pownall Equine Services. Our veterinarians are available for seminars and demonstrations on certain topics at your barn. Please contact your local office if you have a subject in mind that you would like to see presented at the farm. Recent presentations include what to do during a respiratory disease outbreak, looking after the colicky horse and first aid.



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