

GASTROSCOPY CLINIC – ADVICE FOR OWNERS

Why Use Gastroscopy? Currently, the only accurate and reliable way to diagnose gastric ulceration in horses is by endoscopic examination (gastroscopy). This technique allows examination of the stomach and identification of any ulceration, which can then be graded depending on how deep and how widespread it is.

Before the Appointment:

YOUR HORSE MUST BE STARVED FOR AT LEAST 14 HOURS BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT. In practice this means absolutely no hay/haylage overnight. An early evening feed is okay but ensure that everyone on the yard is aware that no breakfast (or treats) are to be given. It would be a good idea to put a notice on your stable door.

WATER SHOULD BE WITHHELD FOR 2 HOURS BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT. During the 14 hour starvation period you should also restrict the amount of water your horse has access to to about half their normal water intake for that period of time.

If the horse has not been starved the stomach cannot be fully examined. Both food and water can be made available to the horse as soon as the effects of the sedation have worn off. When starving your horse it is advisable not to bed them on straw or anything that may be edible. Make sure they cannot access their neighbour's food either! Remember not to travel them to the appointment with a haynet, although bring one with you for after the procedure.

The Procedure: Gastroscopy is performed under standing sedation and sometimes with the additional use of a twitch. The gastroscope is a 3.3 meter long flexible fibre optic camera that is inserted up one of the nostrils and passed down into the stomach. The stomach is then inflated with air to allow full examination of the different regions of the stomach. The specific model we use is a video scope so we will be able to show you what your horse's stomach looks like. Some horses find the initial passing of the scope up the nostril a little unpleasant but the procedure itself is usually well-tolerated and takes around 30 - 40 minutes. Horses can travel home once the sedation has begun to wear off (usually after a further 30 minutes).

Side Effects: There are rarely any untoward side effects following gastroscopy. Occasionally a horse may show mild colic symptoms associated with distension of the stomach by air but this usually resolves once the air is withdrawn at the completion of the procedure. Sometimes the gastroscopy procedure may result in a small nose bleed but this is harmless and will stop within a relatively short time.

Treatment Options: If gastric ulcers are present in the stomach we will discuss treatment and management options with you. There is an oral treatment that we can prescribe that blocks acid production in the stomach. During and following treatment, management and feeding regimes must be optimised to prevent recurrence of gastric ulcers. Follow up gastroscopy can be arranged to monitor treatment progress.