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Hello Everyone

WellI'm late, I'm late, I'm running very , very late.....no I am not a little rabbit running late for a tea party just a wife of a very popular coach and horse trainer trying to keep up with bookings and clinics and horses coming and going!!



Seriously though , I do apologise for the late newsletter! However February newsletter does have some very important articles.



Teeth, a very important health issue for horses. We don't see them so don't tend to think about them.

Have you looked inside your horse's mouth to see the condition of his teeth? Does he has a low or high palate (which can impact on the type of bit you use)?

Does he have sharp edges on his teeth that are slicing through his cheeks? There is good information on how you can do a check at home. If you have never had your horse's teeth checked by a professional, we recommend you do. It can mean the world of difference to the performance of your horse, the horse's comfort, the horse's condition and eating habits and much more.

Further into the newsletter is information which may help you to understand a little more in depth of why your horse reacts (rather than responds) to you and its environment.

Regarding clinics - some clinics are becoming very popular. We recommend you book in asap and pay as soon as you can. I do try to keep an eye of who has paid or not but it makes it hard if with only one place left, someone has booked in but not paid (and fully intending to but forgot) and then I receive a booking and payment for that last place.

If you need time to pay, we will hold your place IF you pay a deposit—call us or email us to arrange that with us.

*One last note—could you please email us that you have made a direct deposit please—then I can tick off that I have your forms and also your payment. **THANKYOU***

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ◆ Horse Behaviour continued
- ◆ Dentistry Basics
- ◆ Quote of the Month
- ◆ Article requests....
- ◆ Clinic dates

ARTICLE REQUESTS

If you would like to request any particular topics/ information to be covered in the Newsletter - please do not hesitate to email Jenny.

OR

YOU CAN SUBMIT AN ARTICLE OF YOUR OWN!

CLINIC SCHEDULE

- ⇒ Glossop, SA - 5,6,7,8 March 2010 - 4 day clinic
- ⇒ Canowindra, NSW - 17and 18 April 2010 - 2 day

ATTENTION

STARTING BOOKING IN FOR YOUR 2010 CLINIC

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'Work makes a horse'

Recognising Dental Problems

Horses may have many problems with their teeth, due largely to the way we keep horses today. A dental examination should be part of any good horseperson's routine. Below is a list of signs of existing dental problems:

Physical signs

- Bad breath
- Nasal discharge (usually one nostril only)
- Undigested grain or large pieces of roughage in manure
- Recurrent bouts of colic.
- Dropping and dribbling feed when eating (known as quidding)
- Dribbling or drooling saliva
- Holding its head to one side
- Chewing on only one side of its mouth
- Difficulty opening or closing its mouth
- Tongue hanging out of the mouth
- Large bumps under the jaw

Growth bumps on the mandible (lower jaw)

- Swelling along the nose, even as far up as just under the eye
- Draining sore on the jaw or face
- Weight loss
- Pain when touching the jaw area

Behavioural signs

- Dipping hay into the water trough before eating it
- Bolting grain or going to the hay first
- Constantly keeping a large quid or pad of hay in the mouth
- Being obviously hungry but refusing to eat, or eating very slowly
- Becoming upset and frustrated at feed times
- Head tossing and/or pulling to the left or right when ridden
- Sudden change in its personality, such as placid to vicious
- Unable to tolerate the bit or being difficult to put the bridle on

The unfortunate fact to note here is that the presence of any of these signs indicates an existing, and probably fairly serious, dental problem. The goal of good horse managers is to never see any of these signs because their preventive dental management programs ensure that these do not develop

Inspecting a Horse's Teeth

Every horseperson should be able to carry out a routine dental examination. The idea is to recognise potential problems, rather than fix them, as the latter is what qualified equine dentists are for.

There are several things you should look for to help you, and these don't necessarily require you having to stick your hand in the horse's mouth!



The External Examination

1. The breath

The first thing you should notice is your horse's breath. Always take a whiff of your horse's breath when you put the bit in its mouth. If your horse has bad breath there is probably a tooth problem.

Also, look at the nostrils for both a bad smell and/or discharge. If there is odour and discharge from one nostril it is likely to be tooth-related. If the odour or discharge is from both nostrils, it may or may not be a dental problem.

2. The manure

Look at your horse's manure. If the particles are over half a centimetre long the horse is usually having problems chewing.



Manure with large particles of undigested hay

3. Eating habits and general behaviour

Watch your horse while it eats!

Does it spill any grain or food (this is known as "quidding")?

Does it cock its head to one side?

Is it preferring to eat hay rather than feed like pellets and grain?

Does it refuse to eat?

Does it look as if its mouth is hard to open or close?

Does it have large bumps under the jaw, swelling over the nose, nasal discharge or oozing wounds on the jaw or face?

Is your horse losing weight for no reason, or having colic problems?

Is there a sudden change in your horse's attitude or manner?

Is your horse throwing its head or pulling to the left or right when you ride it?

Any of these problems could be a sign that the horse has some tooth problem causing pain and discomfort. Unfortunately, once one or all of these signs is present the problem is likely to be serious.

4. The cheek teeth (molars and premolars)

Rest the lower jaw of your horse on one hand, while lifting the head higher than the horse would normally carry it.

With your other hand press the cheek into the outside edges of the upper arcade of teeth using an upward motion. Your horse will move upward and away from its resting position quickly if there are sharp edges on these teeth, so be careful. You can also feel for missing teeth through the cheek.



In this picture the handler is gently feeling along the side of the jaw for sharp edges or missing teeth.

Horses with sharp teeth may initially be identified as they attempt to protect their cheeks and tongue by bolting grain. Alternately they may go to the hay first and constantly keep a large "quid" of hay in the mouth. This quid will protect the horse's cheeks from sharp teeth.

5. Sideways jaw movement

You should also check the sideways movement of the horse's lower jaw by carefully moving the lower jaw from side to side, while the mouth is closed.

Do you feel a sudden block to the sideways movement? With your ear against the horse's cheek, listen for a grinding sound. If you hear nothing, the horse's molars are not touching because the incisors are too long. If the molars don't grind together they cannot grind the horse's food properly.

6. The bars

With your fingers, feel the lower bars of the mouth where the bit sits. Are they rough or smooth? Do they have bumps, scars, bone spurs, lower jaw wolf teeth or pouchy flesh?

Also, feel the upper bars, taking particular note if you can find wolf teeth. Look at the first proper premolars (not the wolf teeth). Do they have sharp hooks on their front edge?

Check the tongue. Is it hard or soft? Is there any cuts or scars on it? When doing this be very gentle. If you pull the tongue hard you can detach it from its anchor point at the rear of the mouth.

Well, guys this information is very important to the health of your horse. Any of you could do an external examination to detect any irregularities. This can be done on a very regular basis.

Then an internal examination is carried out by a professional if you find any irregularities OR even if you don't, a professional still needs to check your horse's teeth every 6 to 12 months depending on the individual horse.

How does one find a horse dentist?

- ◆ Perhaps call a vet for a recommendation
- ◆ Ask around some trustworthy, knowledgeable horsey people
- ◆ Or if you know a big stud, ask their advice—perhaps they may allow you to view a dentistry session with one of their horses.

LEARNING PATHWAYS

Herd Instinct and Herd Instinct and Social Hierarchy

The herd instinct is another inheritance from the horse's wild ancestors.

This means horses like to band together, as being with others of their own kind gives the horse a sense of security. The herd system works to keep horses safe from attack, as horses in the centre of the herd are protected from attacker.

Social hierarchy

In a herd situation each horse has its place in the whole scheme of things.

This is known as a social hierarchy, or a dominance hierarchy - it is the pecking order. Horses maintain their position in the pecking order by fighting.

One horse is normally the boss of the group while the others are bullied into their position in the pecking order. When a new horse is added to the group, the pecking order will be upset for a while. We often see this on studs where a new horse may be released into a paddock containing large numbers.

In a herd situation, two stallions will fight until one dominates.

Practical implications of social hierarchy

As horses sort this pecking order out by threatening to bite and kick, and sometimes carrying out these threats, the group should be watched carefully to ensure that they do not injure each other.

Horses must also be watched when shut up in a small area together, and at feeding times, as these are times when the dominant horse will reinforce its position.

The difficulty here of course is that the enclosed spaces make it harder for the less dominant horse to get out of harms way, and injuries may occur.

Introducing a new horse

The introduction of two strange horses usually results in a basic pattern. Initially they approach each other with their heads held high, and they may toss their heads. The necks are arched and the ears are pointed forward.

The horses then stand face to face and smell or blow air at each other's nostrils in order to establish their scent in the other horse's memory. Often they squeal, rear up or threaten to strike with their front legs. They may then continue to smell each other's neck, withers, flank and rump.

The process may be interrupted by one horse laying its ears back, swinging its hindquarter towards the other horse and kicking out with one or both hindlegs.

It is at this point that the handler, if in the small area catching a horse or feeding horses, must watch out for their own safety as often they can be accidentally trampled or kicked by a horse reacting to another ones aggression.

Usually one horse will give in or submit to the other horse quite easily as horses, unless they are stallions, do not fight very much.

HOW TO AVOID DISASTER

This confrontation between members of an established group and a newcomer can be avoided by putting the new horse in a good solid yard next to the group. This allows everyone to become acquainted, but at the same time the new horse can escape the bites and kicks.

Where do humans fit?

The herd instinct is combined with a strong instinct for submission. In the wild, a herd has a single leader who exerts authority over the rest. It is this instinct which gives the horse a natural tendency to look for leadership and to accept the dominance of the handler, provided that person exerts necessary dominance and calm.

If the handler lets the horse feel that it (the horse) is dominant, the handler will have a lot of trouble making the horse do what it is told. It is this leader-follower relationship that allows horses to be trainable, but also makes for bad relationships if the role is reversed.

Pat Parelli, a well known advocate of natural horsemanship, tells an interesting story of social hierarchy in the herd and what happens when a human is introduced. He says that if there are 10 horses in a herd, and they each have a position numbered one to ten, when the human is introduced each horse looks around and says "here comes number 11".

This sounds funny, and certainly the way he tells it is quite funny, but unfortunately it is true!. The human handler must be number one, and to achieve this must convince every horse in the herd that this is the way it is. Aggression and fear will not achieve this outcome, but nor will an overdose of gentleness and passive behaviour.

LEARNING PATHWAYS

HERD INSTINCT CONTINUED.....

Summary

- The herd instinct is part of the evolution of the horse, and no amount of handling will suppress it.
- A horse will instinctively look to a herd for protection, as this is their purpose.
- Within the herd is a distinct pecking order, which when maintained allows each horse to live quite happily with its fellow herd mates.
- The introduction of a new horse will initially upset this pecking order, but soon settles down.
- In the period of introduction the new horse is quite often at risk of injury, but only stallions will behave extremely aggressively in these situations.
- The role of the human handler is to be number one in the herd. This position must be established immediately, and always maintained

Consequences of Domestication

Domestication is the process by which a population of animals becomes adapted to humans and to the captive environment. This occurs through a combination of genetic changes occurring over generations, and environmental-induced (or learned) developmental events reoccurring during each generation.

In other words - we have taken the animal out of the wild to use for our own purposes.

Therefore the changes and differences that are seen between a wild and domestic animal may be a result of both genetic factors and factors it has learned that help it to cope with its new environment.

There are many things that happen when an animal is domesticated, and thus a domesticated horse will differ from its wild relative.

The horse was probably domesticated between 4000 and 3000 BC. Prior to this the horse was used as a source of food.

The consequences of domestication

When an animal is domesticated it is forced to live close to humans and fit in with our lifestyle. In the early stages of domestication those that do not adapt are killed (or escape) and so the population changes over time. It is no longer a case of survival of the fittest but survival of the most appropriate.

Humans have the power to interfere with breeding, so mating is no longer random within a population but instead is selective. Culling is also selective on certain traits, and change can occur more rapidly in captivity.

Some of the consequences of domestication in horses include:

- decrease in behaviour associated with survival because humans assume the role of protector.
- confinement increases aggressive behaviour because there is less opportunity to get away.
- increased risk of disease.
- increase in less flighty horses because these are favoured by humans
- increase in promiscuous sexual behaviour (in the wild the stallion could pick and choose but this is not allowed in domestic situations)

increase in inbreeding resulting in many previously hidden genetic diseases appearing. Also results in development of distinctive characteristics such as the mane of the fjord pony, which then become specifically bred for.

Modern breeds therefore largely reflect the physiological adaptations that occur in response to a stressful environment, and human's fascination with the preservation of the unusual whenever it occurs.

Only in the last 400 years have specific breeding programs been undertaken to develop horses for specific purposes such as racing, or to meet a particular breed standard.

Domestication probably saved the horse from extinction. The horse has never competed well with man and has become extinct in the wild wherever there has been a high density of people.

While domestication, because it improved human mobility probably hastened the horse's initial extinction in the wild, it did secure the horse's survival as a species both in the domestic and non-captive state.

Horses that exist in the wild today, with the exception of Przewalski's horse, are not wild, untamed ancestors but are reintroduced populations or feral escapees from captivity.

SUMMARY

- Domestication is the process by which a population of animals becomes adapted to humans and to the captive environment.
- It occurs as a result of genetic changes over the generations, and from the environmentally-induced learning that occurs in each generation of horse.
- The horse was probably domesticated between 4000 and 3000 BC. Prior to this the horse was used as a source of food.
- There have been many consequences of domestication. Although these have ensured a more temperamentally suitable animal, its ability to survive and reproduce in the wild has been impaired.
- Overall though, domestication probably saved the horse from extinction, as traditionally they have not survived as wild animals where large populations of people existed. (Information sourced from TAFE notes and internet.)