



MEDICINE WHEEL

EQUINE CENTER

Fall
2006
News

Dr. Bessie Babits

A Message From Bessie

It is such a gift to be riding in a high mountain meadow with the golden leaves of the aspen trees aglow amidst an immense blue sky. The horses are dancing, their hooves light upon the red earth, their heads tossing in the crisp air. It is the wondrous time of fall, a time when the smell of cedar smoke permeates the cold nights, a time when I love to curl up by the fire and read a good book after the day's work is done. The fall is a time to prepare for the winter, and I hope that this newsletter will help you prepare your horses for the upcoming winter.

Medicine Wheel Equine is now in its second month of operation. I am pleased to be able to live and practice here. I cannot tell you how much I value and enjoy the horse people in this community. Thank you so much for your support during this time of transition.

We now have an office location in Arroyo Seco. It is located in the old Elementary (and then Charter) School



I am able to see appointments at this location, so you are always welcome to bring your horses in. I can perform routine fall work, lameness exams, wound care, and dentistry here. I also have a location on the South end of town at Pam and Johnny MacArthur's

barn. The MacArthurs have graciously allowed us to see horses at their fantastic facility, which is complete with stocks. I am also able to hospitalize horses needing wound care or other longer-term management at her barn. Thank you again, to Pam and Johnny.

When you call the main clinic number Maggie Minter if we are not currently working on a horse. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of meeting or speaking with Maggie, she is a competent horsewoman and technician. She is an integral part of this practice and I don't think it could run without her.

If no one answers, then please leave a message, and we will return your call as soon as possible. If you have an emergency, page me directly.

I plan to put out at least a quarterly newsletter on topics which I feel can benefit you and your horses, so please feel free to contact me via phone or e-mail if you have particular topics that you want more information on.

Services Provided By Medicine Wheel Equine

Medicine Wheel Equine provides all routine equine work including vaccinations, health exams, deworming, herd health, castrations, and complete motorized performance dentistry.

We provide reproductive services including mare palpations and ultrasounds, artificial insemination, insemination with frozen semen, foal care, and dystocias in mares. New for Spring 2007 is the establishment of a stallion station. We will offer semen collection and evaluation, as well as shipment of fresh, cooled semen.

I enjoy in-depth lameness evalua-

tion, and have a new X-Ray machine as well as diagnostic ultrasound to aid in diagnosing lameness problems. I take a very comprehensive approach to lameness, and prefer to evaluate subtle lameness seeing the horse in hand and under saddle. I will be more than happy to evaluate you and your horse under saddle, or may opt to ride the horse myself in order to feel an extremely subtle lameness. I have the capabilities to perform Stem-Cell therapy and other state-of-the-art lameness treatments.



Continued on Page 2

Services, continued from Page 1

As part of the Equine Center, I am offering behavior consultation services. If your horse is unhappy in his work, is not performing as well, or you have other problems, please contact me to set up a time for evaluation. I will take as much time as necessary to work with you and your horse to find and solve the problem.

I offer training services as well. This is a growing part of the Equine Center, and so is offered as a first-come, first-served basis for the moment as time allows. I can retrain problem horses, start young horses, and perform more advanced training. Please call ahead to schedule something or to see if there is an available spot.

If there is enough interest, I will put on a colt-starting clinic, problem horse clinic, or advanced horsemanship clinic. Please e-mail me or contact the office at 758-1003.

I always welcome your questions and concerns. If you have a particular topic that you would like to discuss or have in the newsletter, please contact me.

Every day is a gift. I am blessed to be able to help the horses and people in this fantastic community.



MEDICINE WHEEL EQUINE POLICIES

Payment is due at time of service.

We accept Visa, MasterCard, checks, cash and CareCredit.

www.medicinewheequine.com

Email:

drbabits@medicinewheequine.com

Dr. Babits is available for emergency services

Call 758-1003

It's Not About Birds

Lately there has been a lot of squawking about what exactly is "pigeon fever." Over the last couple of months I have seen numerous cases in the Taos and Angel Fire region that have been diagnosed as pigeon fever.

Known as pigeon breast, pigeon fever, dryland distemper and other names, pigeon fever is caused by a bacteria called *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis* which inhabits the soil. The bacteria is carried from the soil to the horse by flies. Through tiny breaks in the skin, the bacteria can enter the muscle of the horse, eventually causing abscesses deep with the muscle. Muscles most typically infected include the pectoral (chest) muscles of the horse (thus the muscles swell and resemble a pigeon's breast), shoulder muscles, axillary (armpit) muscles, and occasionally the abdominal muscles.

The abscesses produce severe inflammation in the muscle and become walled off by scar tissue, often developing a very thick capsule around the abscess. As the abscess grows, the inflammation in the muscle becomes greater and harder to palpate. Clinical signs include swelling, heat, and tenderness over the pectoral muscles (usually), and a basketball-sized swelling may not be uncommon. Horses may become quite lame, and develop swelling and edema in the legs and abdomen.

Horses usually do not become systemically ill, but may develop a fever, lethargy, and inappetance. It may be spread from horse to horse through biting insects. In most cases, a soft spot will develop in the abscess, and may be palpated externally. Typically, the areas are clipped, scrubbed, and the soft spot lanced to drain the abscess. The key in treating these abscesses is to establish good drainage. I do not recommend lancing these on your own, as the abscesses extend very deep into the muscle, and may be very close to nerves and large vessels.

Once the abscess is open and draining, it is flushed daily with dilute betadine. If an abscess is located in an area unsuitable for lancing due to its closeness to an artery or joint, or due to its depth, then hot packs can be applied for 15-20 minutes twice daily until the abscess develops a soft spot or comes to a head. I usually do not place horses with pigeon fever on antibiotics, as this may actually increase recovery time. However, if the abscess cannot be lanced, I will put the horse on an antibiotic such as SMZ. The areas where pus has drained onto the ground are treated with a strong antiseptic such as Rocal to kill the bacteria.

I hope this dispels some of the beliefs concerning muscle abscesses and pigeon fever. If you suspect your horse has pigeon fever, please call our office.

Fall Specials

Now that we have had a few hard frosts, it is time to think about making sure your horses are healthy and ready for the upcoming winter.

The Fall Special includes a thorough and complete physical exam and dental exam. It also includes vaccination for Flu/Rhino (I use a flu/rhino vaccine called Calvenza, which has proven to be more efficacious than other vaccines, and also has minimal to no side effects) and deworming. I prefer to deworm at this time of year with Equimax, which contains Ivermectin as well as Praziquantel (Praziquantel kills tapeworms, which have been implicated in causing colic).

I also recommend deworming with

Quest Plus, which contains Praziquantel as well.

The Fall Special is a time to address any concerns or questions you may have about your horse's health or performance. For example, if your horse has not been performing as well, then perhaps examining for lameness may be something that should be performed in the winter, so that your horse will be fit and sound for the new year.

The Fall Special will now include a brief lameness evaluation consisting of walking and trotting your horse.

For all of your fall work I can either come to you or you may visit us at one of our locations.

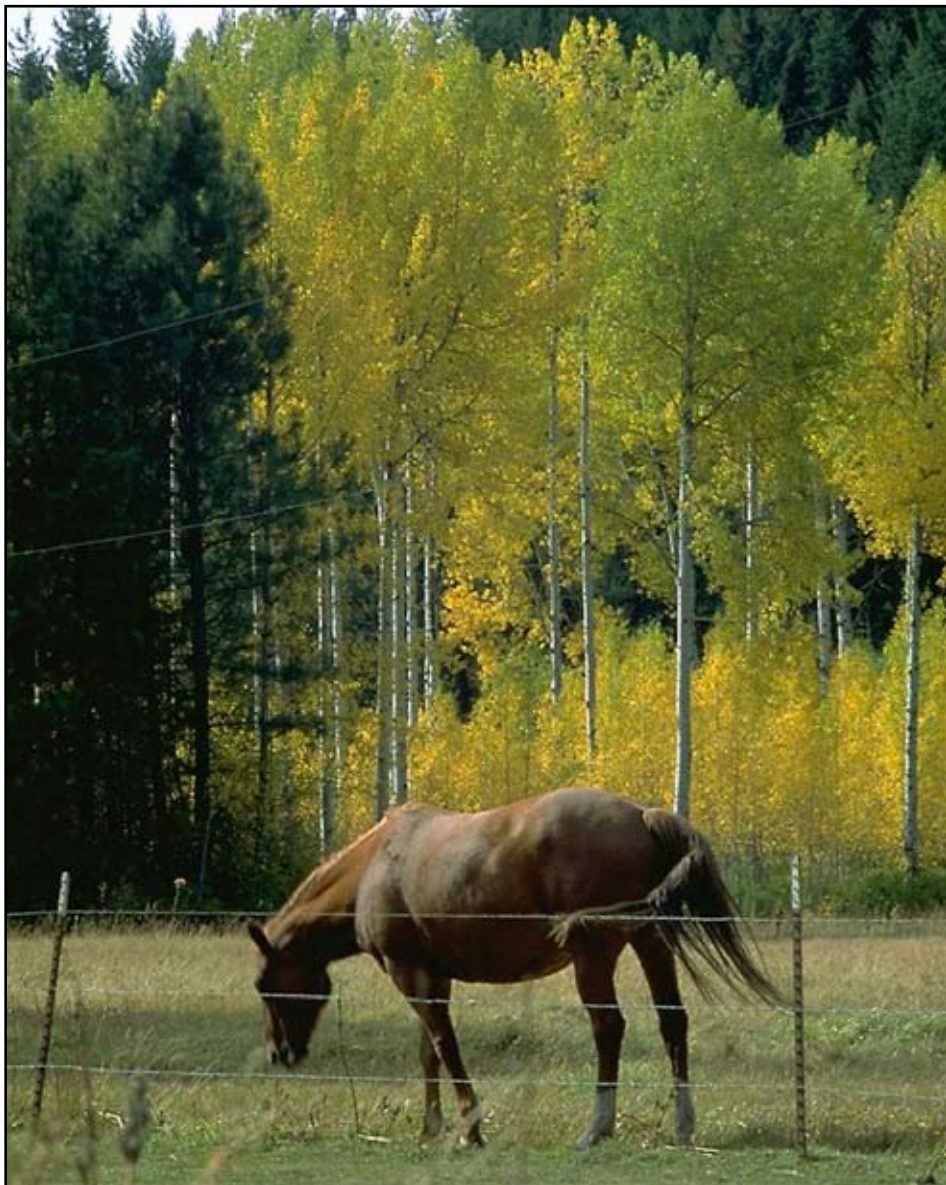
Preventing And Dealing With Colic

I always dread the changing of seasons because, inherently, there is an increase in the incidence of colic. If I could figure out why barometric pressure changes coincide with an increase in colic, I would probably be a millionaire. There are many different types of colic: gas or spasmodic colic, impaction colic, displacements (where the colon moves to a location it normally is not), torsion and volvulus, and the list goes on. Colic simply means “abdominal pain.” The signs of colic depend on the individual horse, but include the following: stretching out, exhibiting the flehmen response (putting the lip up in the air), yawning, looking at his sides, kicking at the belly, getting up and down, lethargic, depressed, refusing to eat, rolling excessively, sweating, and thrashing.

If you find your horse exhibiting these signs, call your veterinarian immediately. The longer a colic goes without treatment, the worse the prognosis, and generally the more expensive the treatment. In many instances, the veterinarian can deal with the colic over the phone or with a dose of banamine.

There are a few things that you can do in the fall and throughout the winter to help prevent colic.

1. The first thing is not to do anything radical in the feeding program or training routine. This means that any new feed should be introduced very gradually to accustom the horse to it. The bacteria that live in the horse’s gastrointestinal tract are responsible for breaking down feed. They become adapted to feed the horse has been on. When feed is quickly changed, the bacteria do not have time to adapt or adjust to the new feed, and thus die or reduce the breakdown of feed. This can lead to a change in motility in the gut, producing the signs of colic.
2. Water: Make sure horses have access to clean, warm water. Many horses will not drink readily very cold water, or will not break ice to get to water. Please use water heaters in tanks to insure that the



horses will have access to water. If they do not drink enough water, particularly now when days are warm, but nights are cold, then they may experience an impaction colic.

3. Electrolytes: You can help your horse and save yourself some worry by adding electrolytes (which conveniently comes in powder form) or 1-2 teaspoons of table salt to the grain. This will encourage the horse to drink and help the function of the gut, as electrolytes are an integral part of normal gut function. As horses put on their winter coats, they will sweat more when asked to work,

and will lose excessive amounts of electrolytes through the sweat. These need to be replaced.

4. Probiotics: Probiotics are normal bacteria that live in the gastrointestinal tract of horses. They are responsible for breaking down feed into useful products. If the population of bacteria is low or changes, the horse may experience colic. A good thing to do is to give your horse a probiotic for 2-3 days during any severe weather change, at the changing of seasons, or during travel.
5. Feed horses what horses are

Continued on Page 4

Preventing Colic, continued from Page 3

meant to eat! Over the past few months you wouldn't believe what I have seen horses eating. In many of these cases, the horses experienced colic. Please feed horses what they are supposed to eat! You can feed a high quality hay such as grass, grass/ alfalfa, or alfalfa. If you feed a concentrate in the diet, it is best to go with something like equine adult, equine senior, Omolene, Triple Crown, etc. These feeds are more digestible than whole oats (which pass undigested through the GI tract and are wasted) and corn (a leading cause of colic, laminitis

(founder), and a neurologic condition). An apple or carrot is fine as a treat, but too many can cause colic. If your horse is experiencing signs of colic, don't try to get him to eat by feeding him apples or carrots. The best thing is to not let him eat anything. If your belly hurts do you eat? Put yourself in your horse's shoes.

6. Deworming: Keeping your horses on an appropriate deworming schedule will also help to prevent colic from parasite overloads. We have several deworming protocols that can be adjusted to fit your routine.



Castrating Colts

Fall is an ideal time to castrate colts. The fly season is tapering off, the weather is moderating, and even this year's foal crop are reaching an age at which they may be castrated.

Colts may be castrated as early as four months. The earlier it is performed the easier it is on everyone involved, including the colt. For different reasons, you may opt to keep your colts intact a little longer until they are 1-2 years of age to allow for muscle development. If you want to encourage a growth in height, then you may want to consider cutting your colt earlier, as testosterone inhibits height.

I highly recommend castrating colts during cooler weather so they will be ready to start training in the spring.

PreventiCare

I know some of you are familiar with PreventiCare, but for those who are not, here is a brief synopsis of what PreventiCare entails.

There is no additional fee for PreventiCare from Medicine Wheel Equine Center! You must have the spring and fall work (vaccinations and deworming with Equimax) performed and then keep your horse on Strongid C daily dewormer.

Through the PreventiCare program you are guaranteed up to \$5,000 for colic surgery, so this is cheap insurance.

If you routinely perform the spring and fall specials, then you may want to seriously consider putting your horse on Strongid C, thus acquiring insurance against colic surgery. Strongid C daily dewormer has been shown to reduce the incidence of colic, particularly in horses that experience chronic colic, and also leads to improved feed efficiency. There are age limitations, so very old horses do not qualify.

MEDICINE WHEEL EQUINE CENTER

Dr. Bessie Babits
PO Box 1183
Ranchos de Taos, NM 87557
505.758.1003
www.medicinewheelequine.com