

NATIONAL EQUINE FORUM

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NATIONAL EQUINE FORUM**

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The Defra View – Arik Dondi, Defra, Deputy Director Exotic Disease Policy

You've invited me to give you the Defra view – Well, it's certainly been an eventful year for equine issues since the last Forum. I will want to say something about events that are directly in my area of work, the first outbreak of equine exotic disease in over thirty years, that was Equine Infectious Anaemia in January, and the work we are doing to ensure that we can respond to other such outbreaks, for example the work on a control strategy for African Horse Sickness. I will also want to talk about developments that others in Defra are working on, so I will touch on passports and ID, location data, and I will mention some research Defra is funding. I am aware that the Defra view may not be particularly uncontroversial in this forum. But in my time of working on equine issues I have learned to value the culture of well-informed and civilised debate that is prevalent in this sector and so I am looking forward to the day and the discussions we will have.

I should say something first perhaps about a subject that may be particularly controversial because many in the sector know it as the "horse tax." In fact, it is about more than a tax or a levy, and it is about more than horses. It is about Government working in close partnership with livestock keepers on managing disease risks, it is about bringing into balance the cost that taxpayers bear and the cost that livestock keepers bear for managing disease risks, it is basically about how we organise ourselves – as a country – to manage and maintain the health of animals. It is about Responsibility and Cost Sharing

The Government published its Draft Bill in January – and is inviting comment on it - with four main areas of interest:

- First, it aims to establish the 'Animal Health Organisation' to take over from Defra responsibility for animal health policy and delivery in England. This puts decision-making at arms-length from Ministers and creates a new board with a wide range of expertise on the livestock industries and animal health which gives the livestock sector fuller involvement in the decision-making
- Second, it would put on a statutory footing the role of the Chief Veterinary Officer (UK), to advise Ministers, represent the UK internationally and co-ordinate policies between all parts of the UK.
- Third, it will simplify existing provisions on payments for animals slaughtered, or things seized or destroyed, for disease control purposes in England and Wales. It will also introduce express provisions to allow reductions in payments where a person has contributed to the spread of disease.
- Fourth, it contains provisions to broaden existing powers in England and Wales to collect and test veterinary samples and vaccinate animals to help in disease management.

A lot of this is aimed at ensuring better management of disease risks by Government, but also by everyone who owns or keeps animals. Ultimately – and this is where the cost sharing element comes in - this will also need the introduction of financial contributions and incentives. The cost sharing measures will be introduced through a future Finance Bill. If you

have a particular interest in all of this, you can find a lot more information and an address to give us your views on the Defra website.

Now, last year at this forum you may remember that we handed out two leaflets on African Horse Sickness. We have been working further with the African Horse Sickness Working Group chaired by Paul Jepson and regularly attended by many others in the room here to increase our preparedness for this disease. Through working on African Horse Sickness, I'd like to think we have also increased the general understanding in Defra of how the equine sector works (I particularly remember a day in Newmarket where Tim Morris and others showed a group of us the wide range of activities that are covered by the equine sector, but we have also rehearsed fictional disease scenarios to work out where the issues would be and what kind of discussions we would need to have). And I hope that it has been a joint and mutual process of increased understanding between Defra and the sector.

The work has among other things resulted in a control strategy and legislation on African Horse Sickness which have been out for consultation for some time now, but you can still comment for another few days. The documents set out what we could expect to see in the event that this truly devastating disease came to England. We are also looking to invest into research that should result in a safe vaccine for African Horse Sickness. Currently there is none that can be safe and can legally be used in this country.

Since the last year we have also improved the ways in which we get views from the sector into policy-making and in which we would work directly with the sector on a day-to-day basis in the event of a disease outbreak. A model of several tiers of stakeholder and scientific expert groupings has served us well during the bluetongue and foot-and-mouth outbreaks of 2007. To ensure that we have similar joint working and decision-making with the equine sector we have recently established a core group of equine industry stakeholders. We have also had several meetings of an equine experts group over the year, for example to get up-to-date scientific advice directly into our developing control strategy on African Horse Sickness.

But unfortunately our nicely developing work on control strategies was not the only exotic disease story since the last forum. On the afternoon of the 19th of January two horses in Wiltshire that had been imported from Romania via Belgium tested positive for Equine Infectious Anaemia. On the same afternoon, the Chief Veterinary Officer, in a teleconference co-ordinating a range of expertise - operational, scientific, legal, communications, public health - declared a disease outbreak and the decision had to be taken humanely to put down the affected animals, as the virus stays in the horse for a lifetime and can be transmitted to other animals by biting insects - when they are around and active. On the same afternoon we also had the first conversation with a group of people from the sector who were incredibly helpful in informing our approach and in helping us communicate back to the wider sector. Over the next few days we had a lot of very intense activity to ensure that the movements of the affected horses were traced, that we understood all the risks of transmission, that any immediate risk factors were properly managed and at risk animals restricted. Colleagues in Defra also worked hard to ensure that impacts on trade and movements were minimised, that information was provided to worried horse owners and that the questions of the media were answered. The map you can see of Equine Infectious Anaemia cases in Europe over the last year or so is from an updated risk assessment by Defra vets published on our website. On the basis of what we know about the risks we are now working in Europe to see whether more safeguards are needed while making sure that trade and movements can continue to take place.

So given that we think that promoting animal health has to be a shared responsibility between Government, the industry and every individual owner or keeper, given that we all want to work closely together for the health and welfare of animals, where do we go next? I assume that the fact that you are at the National Equine Forum puts you among the highly responsible and well-informed people in the sector and in a leadership role. Here are just a few things we might want to jointly communicate to the wider sector.

- This is particularly relevant to the vets here, but not only - there are a number of diseases that, if you suspect you're seeing them, you must notify Government. Here on my slide is a list of them. It is not enough to expect that we will find them through checks on imports or surveillance. It takes vigilance by everyone who cares for animals.
- There is a lot of information about international disease monitoring and risk assessments. If you are involved in moving animals or products around or if you are buying imported animals it is worth asking questions about where they are from and what the relevant disease risks might be.
- Of course, you are aware that there are new equine ID rules in force since July last year. Micro-chipping and up-to-date passports are not just about the protecting the foodchain but to keep animals safe, to make sure there is information, e. g., about where they have been, what vaccines they've had and so on.
- Similarly, if we care about being able to manage disease risks properly, it is important that the data we have is up-to-date and as good as it can be. NED records need to be updated in order to ensure that we have that information. And in this area we are funding a large piece of further research on equine demographics and movements into, around and out of the UK to increase our evidence-base.

Jim Paice MP, Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs

I have done some warm up acts before but never before one for 'nutrition and gastro-ulceration'.

At this time of an election horse world is of great electoral importance but also of real economic and cultural importance. Anyone who watches our best horses and riders whether at Olympia Badminton Cheltenham or Newmarket or hopefully in London in 2012 must be proud of their achievements.

I know that this afternoon you have a session on the Paralympics which I look forward to from family interest and I know from that how horses can add a new dimension to life for thousands of people whose disablement could confine them to wheelchairs. The Riding for the Disabled movement too is in the finest tradition of community action to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

It is estimated that more than 2 million people enjoy horse riding every month.

More than play cricket or go fishing.

A quarter of horse riders are on low incomes – so clearly we are not talking about the exclusive preserve of a wealthy few, but an activity that is being enjoyed by anyone who wants to give it a go.

When the nation's finances are in such a mess it is also worth remembering that the horse industry is a significant economic force.

There are an estimated 19,000 businesses active in the equestrian sector offering services to the sector, including riding schools, farriers, livery yards and trainers.

Taking horse riding and racing together, and you have an equestrian sector that supports – directly and indirectly – around a quarter of a million jobs and injects many billions of pounds into the British economy.

And goodness knows we can do with every penny.

My constituency surrounding Newmarket, home of horseracing and the stud farms including National Stud also countless riding schools, liveries and private owners.

There cannot be many constituencies without their fair share of horses or ponies albeit some in ragwort infested bare paddocks.

So we need to protect and indeed promote the horseworld.

Means no knee-jerk legislation which might have unforeseen consequences

Animal disease – Cost and Responsibility sharing

We are not committed to present proposals but do accept cost and responsibility sharing in principle.

We will await outcome of Rosemary Radcliffe's study.

Any policy in this area must meet certain criteria:

- i) Government meets its responsibility for border bio-security and laboratories.
- ii) Genuine sharing of policy development from which costs are derived
- iii) Any levy must be worth the cost and effort of collection, there must be a cost benefit. According to the Rethink the Horse Tax campaign, an estimated £2.3m would need to be spent to collect just £4.5m. Industry already spends a great deal through private vets, Animal Health Trust and many others. Any proposal must ensure the majority of horses are included otherwise burden is very one-sided.

This leads to issue of specific diseases.

African Horse sickness – we know the potential consequences – halve the industry with devastating consequences for racing, show jumping and eventing.

Equine Infectious Anaemia.

This brings me to passports. At the last election we were committed to abolition or at least making them voluntary but we are five years on, we now have chipping.

Estimates vary because we do not know for certain how many equines there are but it looks like about two thirds have passports although there is anecdotal evidence of forgeries and of stolen horses being given new ones. I know there are benefits in terms of disease control especially where international travel is concerned as well as within the breed societies but do they need to remain compulsory – I don't know and would welcome your opinion.

If they remain compulsory how do we go about addressing the massive evasion which exists and which could seriously undermine any response to a disease outbreak?

Seems that everything is about health and welfare but that is as it should be.
No need for Government to stick its nose into something which works quite well without it.

But animal transport is a highly charged political issue and is one of the biggest items in any MP's postbag. The pictures of horses being transported from the north to the south of Europe are nauseating and strike home to anyone who sees them. Inevitably it demands action but whether that action should be more regulation or simply better enforcement of existing ones is less clear. In our view regulation should always be the last resort and we want to see existing ones properly enforced across Europe.

There is though another aspect of transport – drivers' hours. I am aware of how much difficulty this is causing amateur owners who may well have been driving something else as a job and find they do not have enough hours. Similarly the distinction between what is commercial activity and what is not may stop horse owners sharing transport and on top of that are the regulations about the construction of horseboxes. I cannot stand here and say I have an answer to them all but I can promise an open door to anyone who has constructive proposals as to how we can minimise there impact.

The whole issue of ever-increasing regulation besets every part of society and to use a familiar phrase 'we cannot go like this'. Most of these as you know stem from Europe and the Conservatives are committed to active and early engagement in Europe. It is no good turning up at a meeting of ministers and voting against something – it is too late. We must have better and closer involvement at both ministerial and official level to identify what might emerge and seek to influence or stop it before it goes too far.

Conclusion

Yours is an exciting and successful world where the distinctions between hobby and profession can be extremely blurred, but together you represent an industry worth billions of pounds. Any government worth its salt must understand that for you to succeed both economically but also competitively you need support rather than hindrance.

We prefer incentive over regulation and that preference will guide our approach.

We will work with you to find solutions to challenges which may occur and we will keep out of your way as much as we can.

Endoscopic examination of the galloping horse - Mark Hillyer, Newmarket Equine Hospital

The equine upper airway is frequently implicated in cases of poor performance and consequently is commonly subjected to examination during the investigation of such horses.

Traditional assessment of the equine upper respiratory tract (URT) has been based on analysis of the case history and signalment, physical examination, endoscopic examination at rest and assessment of respiratory sounds at exercise (McGorum and Dixon 2007). The value of assessments, such as the case history and physical examination, cannot be overemphasised but the limitations of endoscopy at rest are now well reported (Lane *et al.* 2006b).

Recently new diagnostic techniques have become available for the assessment of the upper airway. These include techniques for assessment at rest and also assessment during fast exercise. As many of the conditions causing respiratory obstruction in the racehorse are dynamic, and therefore only present during fast exercise, it is logical that their evaluation should take place under similar conditions (Barakzai 2007).

Undoubtedly the use of exercising endoscopy as an investigative tool for the equine upper airway has been the most significant development in recent years. Initially exercising endoscopy was performed on horses working on a high speed treadmill (Morris and Seeherman 1990). As increasing numbers of horses were subjected to this examination the shortfalls of resting endoscopic examination of the dynamic disorders of the equine URT have become apparent (Lane *et al.* 2006b; Tan *et al.* 2005). However, the practicalities of these treadmill examinations has limited the use of treadmill endoscopy in a clinical setting (Franklin 2009).

Technological advances have now allowed the development of overground endoscopy as a practical diagnostic technique in the field (Desmaizieres *et al.* 2009; Franklin *et al.* 2008; Pollock *et al.* 2009). Widespread use of this technique has allowed more accurate diagnosis of the major dynamic disorders of the equine upper respiratory tract (DDSP and RLN). Exercising endoscopy has also allowed recognition of new abnormalities (Franklin 2009; Lane *et al.* 2006a) and the presence of multiple abnormalities (Lane *et al.* 2006a; Strand *et al.* 2009). Comparisons of treadmill and overground exercising endoscopy have been reported and identified where differences between the two techniques may be present (Allen and Franklin 2009; Erck-Westergren *et al.* 2009). The availability of this technique to larger numbers of horses has also allowed a more evidence-based assessment of management and treatment strategies for URT disorders in the horse (Franklin *et al.* 2009; McCluskie *et al.* 2009).

Nutrition and Gastric Ulceration : Cause or Cure? – Dr Pat Harris MRCVS, Equine Studies Group, WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition

Take Home Message

- Gastric ulceration may be present in many horses but there is still controversy over when it becomes clinically significant. Regardless, whenever possible, it would be advisable to try and reduce the number and severity of the ulcers.
- Many factors may increase the risk of gastric ulceration in the non-glandular part of the stomach, including exercise, but nutrition is one that you can more easily influence.
- Horses in general should be fed as much fibre as possible. Many horses and ponies do not require additional cereal based feed.
- Those in little or no work or who are extremely 'good doers' may benefit from being fed lower energy fibre sources and/or restricting the amount (not less than 1.5% BW without advice) but maximising the time taken to ingest (i.e. use double haylage nets/appropriately chopped chaff) – but avoid straw being the only or predominant forage source (very mature forages/straw may also increase the risk of colic in some individuals).
- Ideally feed <1g/kgBW starch /meal and preferably <2g/kg BW starch per day.
- Considering adding some chaff, which includes some alfalfa, into the meal.
- If additional energy is required, consider the gradual introduction of supplemental vegetable oil (up to 100mls/100kg BW) but check the vitamin, mineral balance of the resultant diet or choose a commercial, balanced high oil, high fibre feed.
- Provide pasture turnout whenever possible (although it is important to note that ulcers can occur in pasture managed animals).
- Provide water continuously even when out at pasture.
- Wherever possible and especially in a horse with known predisposition to this problem, avoid stressful situations such as travelling long distances, changing environment and long periods of confinement where the horse cannot freely move around. Consider forage provision during transportation, and immediately on arrival.
- Medical management may be required especially in the initial stages and in particular for those with severe ulceration and those that do not respond to managemental changes.

Introduction

One of the most important, and perhaps undervalued, roles for optimal nutrition in the horse is in the maintenance of health and reduction of the risk of disease. Inappropriate nutrition may also contribute to the development of poor health. Both of these aspects are clearly illustrated when discussing stomach or gastric health in horses.

The horse, as a non-ruminant herbivore, evolved to ingest a high fibre, low starch diet, spending up to 18hrs a day foraging. In the wild it would rarely fast voluntarily for more than 2–4 hrs at a time. Saliva is produced in response to chewing and, under natural grazing circumstances, helps to buffer the gastric acid, which is secreted in an almost continuous but variable pattern into the stomach. In addition, living under natural conditions encourages the horse to move freely which may assist in the normal movement of stomach contents through the gastrointestinal tract.

Certain modern day management practices, which often include intermittent meal feeding (with prolonged periods of effectively being without feed), low fibre/high

concentrate diets, early weaning and intensive training programmes, with limited opportunity for free movement, may increase the risk of a poorly buffered, acidic gastric environment. Such feeding and management practices have been associated with a high prevalence of the Equine Gastric Ulceration Syndrome (EGUS) particularly in intensively managed horses such as the racehorse, where an incidence of more than 90% has been recorded in some subpopulations. By comparison, horses that undergo less intensive or no training, or even a different type of training, appear to show a far lower prevalence. However, even in such populations the incidence can be quite high e.g. a recent study that the author was involved with reported that around 53% of the Danish horses studied, which were in mixed work but not in race training, had ulcers that potentially could be of clinical significance. It is important to note however that the exact prevalence in any group will vary depending on the severity of the lesions included in the evaluation, stage of training/age as well as the type of animal evaluated. Whilst it may not be possible to amend some of the factors that might influence the risk of EGUS (eg breed/age/sex/exercise intensity), nutrition is one component that we can influence. This paper, therefore, concentrates on this aspect.

The stomach of the horse

The stomach of a horse can effectively be divided into two sections, which have both anatomical and physiological differences. The first section, where food enters via the oesophagus, is known as the cranial, non-glandular section (squamous part). This section does not have any protective mucous layer. The second section produces the hydrochloric acid and does have a protective mucous layer. It is usually referred to as the glandular region. Food passes out of this region into the small intestine via the pylorus. These two sections are divided by a clear anatomical region the *margo plicatus*.

The stomach of the horse contains many bacteria, and bacterial fermentation of ingested feed starts soon after the food enters the stomach. Fermentation, in particular of sugars and starch by the gastric microflora, results in the production of a mixture of volatile fatty acids (VFA) as well as lactic acid. This microbial activity and degradation is effectively stopped when hydrochloric acid permeates the gastric contents.

With a forage based feeding system there tends to be a mat of gastric contents with the coarser contents layering at the top and the finer particulate components filtering to the bottom. The pH of the gastric contents will depend on the feeding regimen and the region of the stomach measured. However, typically there is variable pH through the stomach from around neutral in the dorsal portion of the oesophageal region, with a more acidic pH near the margo plicatus (3-6) and a lower pH near the pylorus (1.5-4.0).

What causes Gastric Ulcers?

Basically gastric ulcers seem to occur when there is an imbalance between the various protective factors within the stomach (including the protective mucous layer) and the potentially damaging factors (including the continuously secreted hydrochloric acid as well as certain volatile fatty acids). Unlike in humans the infectious agent *Helicobacter pylori* does not seem to be involved to any great extent in horses.

Acid splashing, due to increased abdominal pressure during exercise pushing the gastric contents up onto the non glandular mucosa, has also been suggested to be important. This will obviously be more significant the more fluid the contents are, and the more intensive the exercise.

Where are ulcers found?

Gastric ulcers have been identified throughout the stomach, in both the non-glandular and glandular regions. However, in most studies the non-glandular region and especially the non-glandular mucosa along the margo plicatus are the most commonly affected.

The non-glandular region is potentially more sensitive to damage, by the gastric acid as well as volatile fatty acids, than the glandular region due to the lack of the protective mucous layer in this region.

What Clinical signs can be seen?

Clinical signs may include abdominal discomfort, reduced appetite, weight and body condition loss, diarrhoea, and particularly in foals, a loss of vitality, dorsal recumbency, and grinding of teeth. From recent work the onset of crib-biting may indicate the presence of gastrointestinal lesions. In one recent study of racehorses, for example, horses with difficulty maintaining body weight were more likely to suffer from ulceration than those which did not.

Debate, however, continues with respect to the relative importance of gastric ulceration in poor performance, (especially ulcers of a lower grade), although there is evidence that treatment may be beneficial on performance in some cases. Many horses may have gastric ulcers that do not seem to cause any problems or do cause minor issues which, however, are thought to be caused by other conditions or which are not recognised by the owners/managers. In our recent study none of the horses were thought to have any clinical problems according to their owners, but >50% had ulcers that potentially could be of clinical significance and it was the impression that some horses did have some loss of condition and reduced appetite. But the signs were usually mild and most owners didn't realise that these had occurred or could be related to EGUS, for example, reduced appetite was often perceived by the owners as the animal being 'fussy'.

What factors increase the risk of Gastric Ulceration?

A number of risk factors have been suggested over the years and have been validated in some, but not all, of the sub-populations studied. These include:

- Workload, with recent work suggesting that horses in light to heavy training for as short as 8 days may be at risk of developing gastric ulcers. A recent study in Australia suggested that the prevalence in racehorses increased 1.7 times for every week of training.
- One study has suggested that electrolytes provided repetitively orally as a paste may increase the risk of gastric ulceration but this needs to be repeated.
- Transportation has been suggested to increase the risk of gastric ulceration but associated changes in diet and management may also be involved.
- Age: older animals have been suggested to be more or less at risk of gastric ulceration.
- Breed: has been suggested to be important in some studies but this may reflect different management practices rather than breed *per se*.
- Gender: The effect of gender has been inconsistent and therefore it is difficult to determine from the literature whether gender does have an overall effect or whether any effect may depend on the breed and use of the animals being evaluated in any particular study.
- Stall confinement
- Temperament/stress, illness, use of non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

However, it is important to note that many of these are directly associated or can be linked with nutritional factors and it is not always possible to differentiate these, e.g. transportation often results in a change in feeding and watering regimens; increased training is often linked with increased cereal /starch intake.

Nutrition the CAUSE?

Whilst nutrition *per se* may not be cause of the ulcers, certain nutritional factors may increase the risk of the condition occurring.

➤ Starch intake

Starch/grain intake has been associated with an increased risk of gastric ulceration in animals working at various levels of intensity. Ulcers have been induced by feeding a high grain ration once a day to stabled animals. Our recent work has confirmed that, at least in the sub-population of Danish horses (non-racehorses) evaluated, exceeding 2g/kg body weight of starch intake per day (for ulcers in either region of the stomach) or feeding more than 1g/kg body weight of starch per meal for ulcers just in the non-glandular section or in either region of the stomach) was associated with an increased risk of potentially clinically significant gastric ulcers.

In this population of animals, the influence of starch intake was independent of workload as an increased level of work was not associated with an increased level of risk (perhaps because in this group of animals cereals were one of the cheapest feed ingredients and so were given to those animals in no or light work!).

Why?

- ◆ High sugar and starch diets are likely to result in more fermentation in the stomach and therefore higher concentrations of certain VFAs which at a low pH may cause damage to the stomach lining.
- ◆ High starch diets are normally associated with lower fibre intakes, which may result in more fluid contents within the stomach (easier to result in acid splashing).
- ◆ High starch diets (based on cereals) tend to result in meals that are eaten more quickly so there is less chewing, which leads to less saliva production and possibly less buffering.
- ◆ Cereals (high starch content) tend to be low in calcium, and possibly other potential buffering agents, which may also contribute to the increased risk of ulceration.
- ◆ High Starch diets are often associated with meals fed intermittently (see below).

➤ Feeding regimen

Intermittent feeding and fasting has been reliably shown to cause gastric ulcers within the non-glandular part of the stomach. In our recent study time between forage meals of > 6hrs, compared with more frequent forage feeding with intervals of < 6 hrs, doubled the risk of potentially clinically significant ulcers within the non glandular part of the stomach.

Why?

It is possible that normal forage based systems result in the presence of a gastric mat of roughage and salivary bicarbonate which may act as a physical and chemical buffer helping to protect the stomach lining from acid damage. Prolonged withholding of feed,

through anorexia or feeding practices may either reduce the size of the gastric mat or increase its fluidity thereby increasing the risk of ulceration.

➤ Type of Forage

In our recent study an increased likelihood of potentially significant gastric ulceration (just in the non-glandular section or in either region of the stomach) was found when straw was the only (or the majority of the forage provided). These horses either had access to straw from their bedding (without any other forage) or were being specifically provided with straw as their forage source. This group received none or only very small amounts of hay or haylage (< 0.25 kg DM/100 kg BW) in their daily ration. Remember that haylage weight for weight will contain more water and less fibre than hay.

Why?

- ◆ Straw may provide low levels of buffering support, due to its low protein and calcium content.
 - ◆ The physical nature of straw may result in mucosal irritation.
 - ◆ Straws inclusion at high levels in a ration may affect the nature of the fibrous mat within the stomach.
- Water provision

In our recent study horses without access to water in their paddock were more likely to have potentially clinical significant ulcers (just in the non-glandular section or in either region of the stomach) but it is not fully understood why this is the case.

How to Manage Gastric Ulcers

Medical management

There are a number of antacids that can be used to help manage those animals that suffer from EGUS. These work in different ways (e.g. preventing or reducing the secretion of gastric acid and therefore increasing gastric pH, or coating the mucosa etc) and are more or less efficacious. There has, for example, been a lot of excellent work to support the efficacy of the 'proton pump inhibitor' omeprazole. However, as the normal digestive processes in the horse may be affected by prolonged alterations in gastric pH, there is insufficient information available to confirm the effect of moderate to long term medication on digestion.

These agents therefore, should perhaps be viewed as a short-term measure to resolve the lesions while changes in management practices take effect; being used more long-term in those animals where managerial changes do not result in continued resolution of the problem.

Nutrition the CURE?

Again nutrition may not necessarily be the cure for gastric ulcers and certainly in those animals with very severe ulceration initial medical management is advised. However, certain nutritional practices will reduce the risk of gastric ulceration occurring initially and should be included in the long term management of any animal known to have suffered from gastric ulceration.

- Reduce starch intake

Reducing the total amount of starch given each day to less than 2g/kg BW as well as the amount provided each meal to less than 1g/kgBW seems advisable.
- Consider oil supplementation

When required, additional energy could be provided by a high oil, high fibre feed, or supplementary vegetable oil which might have other gastro-protective advantages. However, it is important to note that oil inclusion alone may not be able to reduce the adverse effects caused by a high starch intake.
- Forage

Maintaining a high forage intake (but avoiding high straw intake), which encourages chewing and stimulates salivation, may be advantageous. In one study feeding alfalfa hay and grain resulted in higher gastric pH and lesser peptic injury to the gastric squamous mucosa than feeding bromegrass hay with no grain. It is not currently known whether any potential beneficial effect of alfalfa may be due to protein intake, protein quality intake, and calcium intake or cation-anion difference effects. In the meantime it may be advantageous when appropriate to choose a high fibre, alfalfa included feed.
- Provide Water

Providing water continuously, even when out at pasture, may reduce the risk of gastric ulceration in some animals.
- Role for Nutraceuticals

There is limited scientific evidence available at the moment which confirms the efficacy of various nutraceuticals which purport to strengthen the mucosal defences of the stomach etc. This, as was mentioned in last year's talk, does not mean that they do not work but neither does it mean that they do!
- Pasture turnout

Some but not all studies have reported a lower incidence of gastric ulceration in pastured animals. In a survey of thoroughbred racehorses in training, for example, horses with access to some turnout were considered to be less likely to have ulceration, and this risk was even lower if they were turned out with other horses. However, this positive effect of pasture management has not always been seen e.g. a high incidence was reported in mares at pasture perhaps due to other concurrent managemental practices (potentially high grain feeding).

Conclusion

Whilst perhaps not directly acting as the cause or a cure – Nutrition can both increase and decrease the risk of gastric ulceration. The significant nutritional components can easily be modified and reducing total amount of starch given each day as well as the amount provided in each meal is therefore recommended. Ensuring that water is available at all times including in any turnout paddock and that straw is not the only provided forage is also advisable. Finally, leaving horses without forage provision for more than 6 h should also be avoided. However, it is important to note that ulcers can occur in animals with apparently good nutrition and manage mental practice.

War of the Worms - Prof. Chris Proudman, University of Liverpool

This presentation addresses a major issue concerning effective worm control in the UK; drug resistance. The problem of drug resistance in bacteria has been widely reported and some high profile cases have hit the news headlines. Intestinal worms of horses are also beginning to develop resistance to the drugs that we use to treat them. If this situation is not managed appropriately now, it has the potential to make worm control in the future extremely difficult. The presentation will highlight the importance of **sustainable** worm control strategies. Horse-owners' expectations of worm control programmes will also be reviewed. Eradication of all worms is unrealistic and unhelpful. There is growing evidence that low levels of worm infection actually confer health benefits on animals. For these reasons horse owners should be tolerant of low levels of infection; they are not a threat to horse health and are likely to be beneficial. The adage "**less is more**" applies to the control of horse worms as to so many other situations in life!

British Horse Society Undergraduate Thesis The 3D Anatomy of the Cervical Articular Process Joints in the Horse and their Relationship to the Spinal Cord

Holly A. H. Claridge, Richard J. Piercy, Andrew Parry and Renate Weller

Background

Cervical Vertebral Malformation (CVM), also known as Wobbler Syndrome, is a common disease of Thoroughbred and Warmblood horses. It results in progressive compression of the spinal cord at the level of the neck (the cervical area). This causes ataxia, a lack of perception of where the limbs are, and weakness, resulting in the characteristic "wobbly" gait.

There are many factors that have been linked to this spinal cord compression, one of which is disease of the joints in between the vertebrae, the articular process joints (APJs). *Post mortem* studies have shown diseases of these joints, in conjunction with bony change of the vertebrae at confirmed sites of spinal cord compression. Effusion of these joints (distension of the joint capsule with fluid as a result of joint disease/trauma) has been suggested as a cause of compression but has not yet been recorded without other bony and soft tissue changes. If joint effusion did have the ability to cause spinal cord compression before extensive soft tissue and bony change has taken place, then clinical signs may be seen at this earlier stage, allowing earlier detection of the disease and thus giving a better opportunity for treatment.

Aims

This study aimed to describe the 3D anatomy of these joints in relation to the spinal cord. We hypothesised that artificial distension of these joints, mimicking effusion, would cause the pouches of the joints to compress the spinal cord, in the absence of other bony or soft tissue changes.

Materials and Methods

We created 3D images of cadaver necks based on Computed Tomography (CT) scans. We injected shaving foam into the articular process joints to make these visible on the CT scans and to distend them, mimicking an effusion. We then assessed the relationship between the joints and the spinal cord in 3D.

Results

From our images we found that whilst the joints did indeed extend towards the spinal cord within the vertebrae, it did not actually come into contact with the spinal cord at any time. We also established the exact 3D anatomy of the joints at each level of the neck. Based on this we suggest to use a different method to x-ray these joints in future.

Conclusions

From this study, it appears that in the absence of any other soft tissue or bony changes effusion of these joints is unlikely to cause spinal cord compression. However, given that these joints and the spinal cord are in close approximation, in the presence of other changes, an effusion may have the potential to cause compression.

Potential Relevance

This study confirms that these joints do indeed extend towards the spinal cord and we were able to establish the exact extent and direction of these joints at every level. Based on this we suggest that the current x-rays used in these cases may well miss some lesions and we suggest to amend the standard x-ray protocol by an additional view.

Identification: the Legalities, Logistics and Welfare Issues -Dr Madeleine LH Campbell BVetMed (Hons) MA (Oxon) PhD DipECAR MRCVS. President, British Equine Veterinary Association

Identification of horses is desirable in order to prevent fraud (for example the substitution of “ringers” in races or at the time of sale); facilitate the reunion of lost or stolen horses with their owners, and act as a disincentive to theft. In a European context, accurate identification of individual animals has also helped to ensure that certain medicines may continue to be used in British horses, because accurate identification means that one can ensure that a particular horse will never enter the human food chain.

Legalities

In England, identification of horses is governed by the 2009 Horse passport regulations. This legislation was introduced to enforce European Commission Regulation EC 504/2008, following consultation with a Defra-convened industry group known as the “Equine ID regulation implementation board”. The legislation specifies that a horse must be identified by a microchip “or equivalent” means of identification. The Equine ID regulation implementation board considered alternative means of identification to a microchip, for example hot-branding, but came to the conclusion that none offered an equivalent degree of accurate identification to microchipping, because other methods were open to being tampered with. The 2009 legislation is “future proofed” i.e. allowance is made within it for the introduction in future of techniques such as iris recognition or “smart card” biometric

profiling which would offer an equivalent method of identification to microchipping if they became commercially available.

Thus from 1st July 2009, all foals must have a microchip implanted in the nuchal ligament by a Veterinary Surgeon when first identified, within 6 months of birth or before December 31st in the year in which they are born (whichever is the later). The exceptions to this rule in England are Dartmoor, Exmoor and New Forest ponies living wild or semi-wild on those designated areas which, under a schedule to the 2009 Horse Passport Regulations, do not need to be microchipped or identified by a passport whilst they remain within that designated area. If, however, one such pony is treated with a veterinary medicinal product, it must have a passport issued and be microchipped within 30 days of treatment. The schedule also makes specific provisions for how one of these native ponies should be identified by the passport issuing authority (PIO) and when it needs to have a passport if it is moved off the designated area, either to slaughter or to a new home.

In Scotland, the identification of horses is controlled by the Horse Identification (Scotland) Regulations 2009, which are similar to the English regulations and also make exemptions for horses living wild or semi-wild in designated areas. In Wales, identification of horses is controlled by the The Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009. These regulations are similar to the English regulations and also make exemptions for wild and semi-wild horses living in designated areas.

Logistics

In practical terms, identification of horses under the 2009 regulations has been working reasonably well. Because (unlike dogs, in which the microchip is implanted subcutaneously) the microchip must be implanted in the nuchal ligament of horses, implantation is designated as an act of veterinary surgery. The procedure is well tolerated by the vast majority of horses. Occasionally it is necessary to sedate a horse in order to perform the implantation accurately. Very rarely, implantation results in formation of an abscess, which must be treated by a Veterinary Surgeon.

The fact that the UK has 70 PIOs has made passport legislation more difficult to implement effectively in the UK than in some other European countries, since the exact requirements for the information provided on a passport differ between PIOs.

Many of the benefits of microchipping in terms of accurate identification of horses at the time of sale or competition are reliant upon the national equine database (NED) functioning effectively. There are still some problems with the database, for example the large number of dead horses recorded on it (despite the fact that passports ought to be returned to the passport issuing authority when a horse dies); and issues surrounding data protection. However, increasing the number of horses which are microchipped in the UK ought to help the NED to function better.

Welfare issues

Accurate identification of equids has a positive impact on welfare by allowing identification of lost/stolen animals; identification of abandoned animals and their legal owners (and potential prosecution of those owners), and facilitating disease control in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease. There is, unfortunately, no permanent method of equine identification which is entirely pain free at the time of application. We are therefore weighing up the temporary application of pain to an individual animal against the long-term

benefit to that animal and to the equine population and industry of having the animal accurately and permanently identified. In justifying causing short-term pain for these reasons, we should ensure that the (a) pain is minimised and (b) the method of identification is tamper-proof and permanent. Much publicity has surrounded the Scottish Parliament's recent decision to suspend licensing of hot branding of horses whilst they consult on whether hot branding ought to be banned. Both the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) and the Ethics and Welfare Group of the British Veterinary Association (BVA) have considered the issue of hot branding since last year's national equine forum. Both organisations have concluded that hot branding is (a) painful and (b) an unreliable means of identification. Thus both BEVA and the BVA believe that hot branding of equids is no longer acceptable for welfare reasons, and that it is anyway not a method of identification which complies with the standards required by the 2009 legislation. Microchipping, in contrast, probably causes a degree of pain consistent only with an intramuscular injection, and there is no evidence of any successful ante-mortem inactivation (for example by MRI scans) or means of removal. The pain inflicted is minimised and the identification is tamper-proof and permanent.

There are legitimate arguments made for a need to identify horses at a distance, or to have them visibly identified in order to deter theft. An alternative to hot branding is freeze branding, which seems to be well tolerated by the majority of horses. There is however, a dearth of reliable experimental evidence on the absolute and comparative pain induced by hot branding and freeze branding, and BEVA would welcome such studies. An alternative method of visible identification, and one which some owners of semi-wild horses are starting to use in an effort to make their animals visible to car owners, is a neck band. This method has long been used in broodmare groups in Australia. Whilst the neck band can obviously be removed or lost, and is therefore not a deterrent to theft, use of a neck band in conjunction with microchipping might provide a practical and reliable means of identification of horses in wild or semi-wild situations.

The Museum of the Horse – Caroline Anns-Baldock

The theme of this year's NEF, 'The Horse in Art and History' goes to the very heart of our project to establish a museum of the horse in the UK.

We are said to be a nation of horse lovers and yet we are the only European country that does not have a museum of the horse.

This project is of great importance, if we value our equestrian heritage. We need a museum of the horse because, without horsepower, this country would not be where it is today and the story of the horse and its role in our civilization deserves to be told. The ancient Britons harnessed the horse; the horse ploughed our fields, suffered and died in our wars, pulled our loads, carried us, participated in our sports and embellished our ceremonies.

Cut into the chalk of the Berkshire hills, the White horse is proof of the magical intensity in which this animal was revered. The horse is part of the myth and magic and storytelling of our country, equestrian themes in literature and art abound, the magnificence of the horse

embellishes the portraits of great men and great women and yet we have no centre to laud this animal's service, friendship and loyalty to us.

Millions of people in this country enjoy equestrian sports. Riding schools are thriving, they are better organized and equipped than ever before. Equestrian circus is growing in popularity in Europe and has emerged here as a wonderful medium to draw people into the world of the horse. There is no shortage of enthusiasm for horse shows. Students are pouring into equine studies. War Horse a theatre production in London using puppets to great effect has attracted thousands of people through its doors. People are keen to learn more about the horse, to ride - be it a holiday, a donkey on the beach, a long distance ride to hunt or go to shows and explore the keenness of competition in many disciplines. These millions of people would love a museum of the horse where wonderful exhibitions could be put on developing our knowledge of the horse and its accoutrements, its history and evolution. Why is it then, when an exhibition on the horse, All the Queens horses' was organized using many exhibits from the UK, - it was held in Kentucky!

WHO IS DOING IT AT THE MOMENT

Many facets of the history of the horse are recorded in other museums, but nowhere has there been a concerted effort to celebrate the horse in all its diversity under one roof. There are many small collections and rural museums, various carriage collections and a National Racing museum, but nothing dedicated specifically to the horse. Many museums record and celebrate aspects of our past that have had much less significance than the horse, and yet the horse, that cornerstone of human development, has not (yet) got such a museum.

I would like to applaud the City farms as they do a wonderful job in bringing children and animals together in an urban environment so divorced from life in the country. We would hope that this museum respected the need for city folk to be closer to the horse.

Many years ago the Natural History Museum had a wide range of equestrian exhibits. Today many of them have been taken off general view.

In 2002, I was drawing horse bones in the Natural History Museum under the guidance of their knowledgeable and inspirational staff. I found down in the bone filled bowels of the museum many of the exhibits I remembered from my childhood. The skeleton of the great racehorse Brown Jack, the case of jaws telling the age of the horse, St Simon the famous

racehorse and many other exhibits that have been taken off general view. If you want to see them today you have to get permission from the head of the Mammal Dept.

The museum might well be kindly disposed towards finding a new home for these and other exhibits.

The skeleton of the famous race mare Blink Bonnie was thrown over the wall at the back of York Racecourse many years ago, no one cared. No one was interested in such a dull item obviously not worthy of conservation.

Horse bones are often dug up and lie in storage waiting for someone to find some link that will restore the importance of their archeological journey over thousands of years. We need a museum specifically dedicated to caring for and evaluating these collections. The evolution of the horse is still with us, they are still evolving. There is research to be done.

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

30 years ago, I thought the UK ought to have a museum of the horse. 25 years ago I started a collection of equestrian artefacts'. In 1994 a group of like-minded people including James White formed the first committee and we met at the Royal mews. James White told me he had a collection that could be used as a basis for a museum. Sadly, he died before he could put it all in writing. Despite this setback, we battled on. I purchased a mystery item from the auction sale. Two beautiful antique saddles were purchased for the Pitt Rivers Museum.

I was presented with the bit and spurs owned by the Cossack Father of the great dancer Pavlova. John Gillow, a collector of antique textiles, has given me items he has found in far-flung places, and Harvey Derrien bought a saddle back from Mali for me.

In 2004 we set up an exhibition in Bourne Hall, Ewell near Epsom that ran from the July to the October themed THE ORIENTAL HORSE AND ITS INFLUENCE IN MODERN HORSE BREEDING. We also had a showcase on Lord Mottistone known as 'Gallop Jack' and his horse Warrior.

In 2007, following a year of hard work, the collection was photographed and put online. It has been an interesting and challenging journey to work with a professional web designer who had no idea of what I wanted and quite frankly nor did I, but we got there in the end.

In June 2008, the website, museumofthehorse.org went live and it clocked up a total of 40 visits in that first month. It requires constant work with additions to the collection and new articles. Our latest figures show that visitors are gradually increasing and are now more than 2000 a month. We are No 1 in Google and have three YOU TUBE videos.

In 2009, we set up a petition on line and took this to London where we handed it to Jim Fitzpatrick the Minister of the Horse. I recall a friend of mine saying, "You wouldn't dare to ride up Whitehall as Lady Godiva would you?" Oh dear, I do like a challenge.

And so, to add a little spice to the day I rode my racehorse, Melmott, up Whitehall in the disguise of Lady Godiva. It took some organizing and when on the phone to the Met Police I explained that I would be wearing a body stocking, there was a sudden silence at the other end of the phone and then a voice said, "What a pity."

I think I thoroughly embarrassed all my friends and probably Jim Fitzpatrick as well, but I have to say they all took it all in good heart.

We now have a committee including, a curator, a writer of equestrian literature, an accountant, an expert on equestrian buildings, two local councilors and an owner of a well-known coaching business. There is an outer circle of advisors that include Guy Wilson, ex head of the Royal Armouries, his associate John Waller, Colin Henderson, ex head coachman of the Royal Mews, Joyce Bellamy, Carl Boyde and Lucinda McAlpine

THE TRUST

We are in the process of setting up a trust so that financial support can be channelled into projects such as the website, travelling exhibitions, and a feasibility study once we have identified a home for this project.

WHAT THE MUSEUM WILL BE

We envisage that this project could be annexed to another collection already in existence. Or perhaps become part of a local museum with equestrian leanings.

We would like it to be close to a large urban catchment, as it is precisely those city children who do not see a horse on a daily basis we would like to attract and inspire.

We are going to need exhibition space of about 35,000 square feet. We would also like to have stables and a covered arena with adequate seating. We will need parkland and pasture.

We will be putting together a team including fundraisers, administrators, curators, equestrian experts, volunteers, caterers, horse trainers, stable staff, and IT experts. Galleries will attract sponsors and will be named after them. What a legacy for you to leave.

With these facilities we can give people an insight into the world in which their ancestors lived. We will re-enact scenes from history using the horse. We can bring to life the past and share experiences such as riding in a stagecoach, giving children a chance to experience something unique and exciting, allowing them to understand what it must have been like to have been alive in Dickensian England; they could meet a highwayman or Laticia Lady Lade, talk to the Empress of Austria. We could re-enact the Tilbury speech of Elizabeth I. We can do so much.

Children need to know the milk was delivered by horse and cart, they need to know that horses pulled train carriages, they need to understand what London was like at the height of the Victorian period with 100,000 tons of horse manure removed from the streets every year and how horses were housed the city in two and three story buildings, the equivalent of blocks of equine flats with wide circular stairways. They are still there today and can be seen in Camden and in The Colonnade, just behind Queen's Square.

Children should know that story of Black Beauty was a reality not just a fiction, and that 4 million horses died in the 1st World War. Children today, despite living in cities would benefit from understanding the nature of the horse, they would benefit from being closer to equestrian culture. There is a saying in America, THAT NO HORSE EVER RAISED A BAD KID. Animals have an important part to play in our development and understanding of life. The horse still has so much to give.

Projects we would like to start this year are:

We have researched for an exhibition on Mules from Roman times to the present day, with some unique film footage of a Mule train in Northumbria. We have just set up another exhibition in a saddlery in Chobham, Surrey.

A biography of Mary Littauer whose research on early harness systems has proved invaluable. We are working with Margaret Broadbent in the hope that we can purchase some of the accoutrements of the horse that her mother Moira collected. These unique pieces should be kept in the country as it would be a tragedy if they were dispersed.

There is a degree of urgency as artefacts associated with the horse in the past are disappearing, and, even more significantly, humans with experience of using the horse in Britain for anything but pleasure are also becoming rarer as death takes them off. Without their knowledge and experience being recorded it will be lost for all time.

WHAT CAN YOU DO

We are looking for support for this project from people interested in preserving and developing our equestrian heritage. We invite sponsors both in kind and finance. We welcome ideas with the potential for networking culminating in developing long lasting and productive ties.

The myth, magic and history of the horse should be told. Help us tell this story. Help us bring a museum of the horse to the UK. Help us establish an institution of high standing and a live museum, that will pass on to our children the knowledge and experience of a world that has all but gone. Please help us correct this appalling oversight, it is almost unthinkable that we do not have a museum of the horse. My collection is a foundation upon which this museum can be established. It presents an opportunity to build something so excellent that everyone will come. If the Eden Project can work, so can this! There is a job to be done here and we welcome and we need your support. I believe in this project with all my heart. The United Kingdom needs a Museum of the horse.

Images: www.museumofthehorse.org

Training for World Class Paralympics - David Hunter

Your Royal Highness, Ladies & Gentlemen

Not Paraplegic (paralysis of legs & lower body)

Not Paralytic (although have seen and been involved in some great post games parties!)

Para – running in parallel to Olympics

Started Stoke Manderville in 1948, first sport archery 16 competitors.

1st Official Games Rome 1960, 400 athletes, 23 countries, GB 2nd in medal table behind USA.

Beijing 3951 athletes, 146 countries, GB 2nd to China with squad 206 athletes, 200 support staff.

Equestrian started Atlanta 1996

Borrowed horses, change to own Athens

UK standing in para dressage, have won every team medal & topped thye tally of individual medals at all Para, World and Euro Champs since 1996. Quite an achievement and I don't intend to loose that record on 'my shift'!

DH lucky to have inherited successful team 8 yrs ago – continue – stay ahead of the other nations, but how?

First place not always easy, 2nd knock off perch.

Who are the threat – Germans, Dutch, Norweigans.

How do we remain competitive and successful.

- RDA (explain the diff) Classification
- UKSport – lottery funding, biggest contributor to riders
- Evolution of WC funding and Performance Team
- Funding issues for riders.
- DH role – performance accountability.
- Professional and consistent support team. Coaches, trainers, vets, osteo, farrier, doc, physio, phycho, carers, neutritionalist, strg and conditioning, saddler (pliance). Grooms – training. (consistent core team).
- Funding allows - fully integrated into NGB – BEF, BD (not case for other nations), other 3 Olympic sports. Paralympics GB.
- Talented riders, performance programme (9 riders in podium). World Class athletes.
- Talented horses. Need more horses, type of horses (paces, temperament). Not RDA horses/ponies.
- Pyramid top/elite riders at top, must have strong base – healthy development programme 10 riders.
- Open selection process onto squad and for riders to major championships.
- Rider/horse reviews.

- Team/squad training. Training hard, compete easy. Cohesion of 'team', gel, work together, team dynamics. Accused of running the squad in a military manner! Training and compete regularly, compulsory, not optional. Team success, individual success follows.
- Things not left to chance. Practice beforehand; try things out, hard work done before competition.
- Full support team works with riders and horses all time and even more so in build up to major comp.
- Good communication, all informed. All riders and programme staff MUST/use email. Comms at comps, phones, briefings, notice boards Full programme/itinerary, all info needed is given to everyone – but do NOT take away individual responsibilities!
- Major comps, recces (time spent in preparation is never wasted).
- Arrive in plenty of time, prepare stables, accomm in advance.
- Horse training regime at comps – role of vet and lead coach.
- Relationship with comp organisers.
- Team identity. First impression, put opposition on back foot.

How to stay ahead from now to London 2012, what do we have to do?

London confirmed max 5 riders, 4 confirmed, 1 to qualify later in year at WEG.

WEG 7 riders (abroad comps, Norfolk in Sept), Euro 2011 Belgium try things for London.

London

Home Advantages.

View, recce venues.

Stewards, helpers, officials, volunteers all routing for us. Perhaps some will be known to us!

Home DISADVANTAGES

More of issue. Difficulty of maintaining tight team

Easier abroad.

Family, friends, owners.

Fewer riders (7 in Beijing)

Pressures

Accreditation will be v tight

London venue Great for all sports and Greenwich fantastic for Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian

Fully integrated Games with all other disciplines, village, central London. Not on a limb, i.e. HK more like a world champs.

Will be a massive occasion, home team, home ground and equestrian just one of 20 sports, 471 events, 4,200 athletes, 162 nations, 20 competition venues, 11 days of sport and Team GB predict 300 athletes and plan to be 2nd in medal table. Equestrian plan to retain Team Gold – and pick up a few individual medals in the process!!

DVD to be shown

Thank you

Training and Regulation of Paraprofessionals – Chris House MRCVS

“Paraprofessionals” in this context means those persons in the UK other than veterinary surgeons providing veterinary services or similar to the general public. The provision of veterinary care in the UK is currently regulated by the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. This legislation applies principally to the veterinary profession with only limited application for others such as equine AI technicians who are exempted under Section 3 of the Act while other major groups such as equine dental technicians are not covered by the legislation at all.

This brief presentation explores the current options for regulation in the UK of these groups in the UK with reference to training, a possible new Veterinary Services Act and the introduction of the EU Services Directive.

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If you wish to suggest topics for future Forums please e-mail:

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