

# HEALTH TEAM REPORT

"SPRING AND SUMMER PRECAUTIONS!" BY: SOPHIE THOMAS

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Summer is here and the sun is shining and the horses are happy. With the arrival of summer comes a new set of seasonal preparations to keep our horses fit and healthy. Some considerations to keep in mind in the Summer.

- **Coat Care:** It is very important to maintain with coat through routine brushing in order to assist with shedding and prevent the buildup of mud. Horses who have not shed out their winter coats will heat up faster during work, take longer to cool down and stay wet for longer. The horses are also at risk for skin conditions such as rain scald which is caused by a fungal organism and proliferates readily in moist conditions. It is contagious and can spread quickly so if a new horse is suspected to be a carrier, isolation is required.
- **Heat and heat stroke (hyperthermia):** Heat is always a problem especially for those of us that cannot flick on the AC. For horses, heat stroke is a real risk but can be reduced if you take specific precautions. Do not ride/work the horses in the middle of the day. Stick to the cooler mornings and afternoons or shorten the session. If you cold hose them, start with the legs and *never* cold hose the haunches after a workout to avoid shock. Also, older or sickly horses have a harder time adjusting to heat so avoid working them at all during hot days. If you suspect heat stroke, put horse in a cool place, call the Health Team and apply water to the legs and eventually the back while waiting.
- **Access to water:** In the "Winter Precautions" article in our Winter Newsletter, I mention that horses are at a higher risk of dehydration due to a reluctance to drink the frigid water. In contrast, in the summer horses require unrestricted access to cool, clean drinking water in the summer. Check the buckets for dirt and fly larvae: dump, clean and refill them if you find too much grime.
- **Fly control:** Fly control is an integral part of Summer time care for horses. At Circle F we are at particular risk to sensitivities and disease spread through flies. To combat this we apply daily fly spray, use fly masks, decrease the amount of standing water and hang fly traps. An addition to our fly control is that we now add apple cider vinegar to our horse's daily feed- an innovative suggestion brought up by our Health Team member Natalie Lavalie. Thanks Natalie!
- **Deworming:** The Spring is an important time of year for internal parasite control as some worms come out of dormancy and thrive in warm, moist conditions. They can also be readily spread throughout the pasture in the horses manure. Each horse receives deworming throughout the year but especially the week before they start grazing on the pasture grass. Signs of worms include poor coat quality, listlessness, weight loss, distended belly and general discomfort. Each horse received a dose of ivermectin before being introduced to the pasture.
- **Feet health:** All of our horses are kept up-to-date on trimmings, soundness assessments and shodding (protecting the foot with a metal shoe) when needed. As we enter into the warmer weather foot growth speeds up making it necessary for more routine maintenance. And, if a horse had shoes pulled for the winter, it is time for those to go back on. If this is the case, you will be alerted as to which horses have new shoes on as they will be tender as they adjust. Thrush is also a concern if the pasture is muddy. If you notice a strange smell or discolouration of the hoof (particularly at the cleft and wall), alert the Health Team so that it can be addressed immediately.

*Interesting fact:* Because we do not ride or work with the horses as much during the winter, it is important to slowly introduce the horses to riding in the Summer to avoid lameness and tender toes.

- **Grass control:** At Circle F our horses have little to no access to fresh green grass throughout the late fall and winter. This makes it necessary for us to limit their grazing time in the Spring so that they do not over eat the new, sugar-heavy grass. We accomplish this through integrated grazing time which allows the horses increasing access to the grass over a period of time. This keeps their weight in check and prevents digestive upset and foot disorders such as founder, a condition that causes inflammation in the hoof which is very painful.

Along with these tips, I have put together a binder of helpful information. This is available in the barn in a red binder. Please familiarize yourself with its contents so that you may refer to it should you need to. Thank you.