



FOURWAYS EQUINE CLINIC

PO Box 30135 Kyalami 1684
Tel: 011 468 3393 Fax 011 468 3394
Emergency: 0824590129
Email: sandy@fourwaysequine.co.za



fourwaysequine Blog

Look into my eye - Part 3

Eye tumours and Growths

Eye tumours are very evident and easy to see in the advanced stages, but can be difficult to diagnose early on in the disease. The visible tumours are found on the third eyelid, the conjunctiva and the surface of the cornea. While tumours behind the eye are only diagnosed very late in progression and usually result in the loss of the eye or horse.

Growths of the third eyelid or conjunctiva:



Tumours of the third eyelid can be easy to see in advanced stages like this. However in early stages it may look like sugar granules on the surface and only seen during a routine eye exam. Most horses have a comfortable eye and don't show any evidence of discomfort. However most tumours are Squamous Cell Carcinoma or melanoma, commonly called skin cancer, which is extremely aggressive in nature and spreads rapidly to involve the whole eye.

Other tumours that are possible, but not as common are Sarcoids. The diagnosis is made by cutting the tumour out under heavy sedation and sending it into the lab for final diagnosis. Depending on aggressiveness of the growth and the decision of the vet, chemotherapy may be injected into the lesion after removal. Horses that are high risks to this disease generally have pink 3rd eyelids with very little pigment (appaloosa and paint horses) and/or are not protected from the UV radiation by means of shade or a mask.

Growths of the Cornea:



Corneal tumours are generally rare, but can be caused by the same cancers as above.

However, in Southern Africa there is another important cause of growths on the cornea- Habronemiasis. Fly larvae are eaten by the maggots of the common house fly and stable fly, which then develop in the maggot until it becomes an adult fly. The adult fly then sits on the horse's eye and deposits the larva in the eye, causing an infection. In both eye and wound infections the larva can't mature into adults but rather migrate in the eye causing damage and severe irritation.

Horses with fairly new infections have very teary eyes, are sensitive to light, and clouding of the cornea can be seen. Later on in the cycle, if gone untreated, wart like lesions on the conjunctiva and cornea can be seen.

Once the diagnosis is made a pesticide is dropped into the eye on a weekly basis until the worms are dead. In-between the horse is treated with anti-bacterial eye drops and systemic anti-inflammatories. If the growths are extensive and not resolving, they are removed under general anaesthetic. This is very easily controlled by ensuring horses have fly masks and fly populations are controlled. Male horses with Habronemia may also have infected genitalia.



Trauma

Eyelid laceration:



This has a tendency to make clients upset very easily, but with prompt treatment is resolved with a few stitches and some eye drops. However if left too long the tissue can become non-viable and it will need to be removed, causing the horse to not only develop secondary problems from a lack of eye lashes and tear glands, but also be unsightly.

Ruptured globe:



Unfortunately this is a common thing with kicks to the face or deep ulcers that have ruptured. It is generally very painful and requires surgery to remove the eye. Surgery can be done either standing under heavy sedation and nerve blocks or general anaesthetic. Horses are much more comfortable from pain after the procedure. They can take a while to adapt to the narrowed vision but cope very well and can return to full potential within a few months.

In order for a horse to have a happy and sight filled life, it is the job of its caregivers to inspect the eyes regularly and give them the protection that they need from the elements and flies.

The Fourways Equine Clinic team are always on hand to help you and your horses, with any concern: 011 468 3393

Follow us on Facebook: Fourways-Equine-Clinic