



Delmarva Equine Clinic Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 4

www.delmarva-equine.com

Fall 2011

Sedation

Michelle Egli, DVM

Do you have a horse that is “difficult” for routine horse husbandry procedures such as clipping, sheath cleaning, or shoeing? Is he also a bit of a “pain” to give an injection to? Or maybe you’re not comfortable giving intramuscular injections? If any of these apply to your horse or you, you’ll be interested in hearing about Dormgel®.

Dormgel® (detomidine hydrochloride) is an easy-to-administer sedative gel that is administered orally under the tongue. If you are capable of paste deworming your horse, you can easily administer Dormgel®. It results in mild but significant standing sedation that is appropriate to restrain your horse for minor, non-painful routine husbandry procedures. However, Dormgel® does not provide significant pain relief and should not be used for painful procedures such as suturing a wound.

Dormgel® is provided in a single-use syringe with the dosage based on the weight of the horse. It is designed to be administered sublingually (under the tongue). Once the drug is administered, all food and water should be removed from the horse’s stall and the horse should be kept quiet. Onset of sedation occurs within 40 minutes and lasts for up to 2 hours. Because the drug can be absorbed through the skin and will cause significant reactions in people, impermeable (latex or nitrile) gloves should be worn when administering Dormgel®.

Dormgel® is available by veterinary prescription only. Please contact our office if you believe that Dormgel® may be right for you and your horse.



Dr. Egli administering dormgel.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Sedation
- 2 Body Condition Scoring

Body Condition Scores

Lindsey Lundblad

Keeping your horse at a healthy weight is crucial. Different breeds, disciplines and ages of horses may differ in weight so it is good to know how to tell if your horse is too fat or too skinny. The Henneke System was made, using a scoring system (Body Condition Score) of 1-9, usually in increments of 1/4. A score of 1 is an emaciated horse, and a score of 9 is an obese horse. The way to check your horses' BCS is to look at the crest of the neck, their withers, their lower back, tail head, ribs and behind the shoulder.

A horse with a score of 1 is emaciated with no fat on any of those locations. A score of 2 shows a slight bit of fat, but still very skinny, and a 3 shows some fat build up but bones are still visible. A score of 4 has "enough" fat build up to where you can barely see bones, but it still is not enough to help them through stressful situations. A 5 is the ideal weight for most horses. There is "spongy" fat in all of those locations, and a smooth appearance throughout the body. A 6 has a moderate amount of flesh and you can feel fat deposits. A 7 has fat in between their ribs, and all along the other locations of their body. A score of 8 makes it hard to feel ribs, they have a very thick neck, and a positive crease on their back. A 9 has no muscle definition, the entire body is fat.

Things you need to remember when giving your horse a score: If you decide to give your horse a body condition score during the winter, or when they have a longer coat, make sure you feel those locations rather than doing a visual check. Also, older horses lose muscle tone, so adding .5 to their score will make it more accurate. Certain breeds also have more prominent withers, such as thoroughbreds, so scoring them .5 less of what you think would be best. Ponies and draft horses also have more flesh naturally, so you can add .5 to their score for more accuracy. Most importantly, a lot of people will look at the size of the horses' stomach to decide if it is fat or not. But you must ignore the size of the stomach and focus only on the neck, withers, back, tail head, ribs and shoulder for the most accurate scoring.

Depending on what you use your horse for, will also change the body condition score it should have. For endurance type horses, eventing, and polo horses, their BCS should be between 4 and 5; race horses (standardbred and thoroughbred) should be between 4 and 6; hunter jumpers, show jumpers, dressage and quarter horses should be in the 5 to 7 range. Now that you know how to score your horse, you can make sure your horse is the right weight throughout the entire year.



Krystle Jackson (vet tech with DEC) with Kylee.