

Gastroscopy

Equine gastric ulcer syndrome (EGUS) is becoming more and more common within the equine population and is something we deal with on a fairly regular basis here at Abbey Equine. It can be the cause of a variety of clinical and behavioural issues but happily the majority of cases are very treatable.

If you notice any of the following with your horse or pony, then they may be suffering from Gastric Ulcers:

- Behavioural changes
- Poor performance
- Poor coat condition
- Poor appetite
- Recurrent bouts of colic
- Resentment of girthing, brushing or rugging

We use a special 3metre long Endoscope (camera) which is linked to a large screen when carrying out Gastroscopy to visualise the inside of the horse's stomach. We are able to see whether ulcers are present or not and also which type. Once diagnosed, we can offer the most appropriate treatment.

The Two Types of Gastric Ulcer

1. **Squamous Ulcers** affect the top third of the stomach and reflect increased acid exposure of the tissue there. They are quick to form and are associated with increased stress levels, high starch diets, intense exercise and alterations in management and diet. Horses with squamous ulcers may display changes in appetite and poor performance/fatigue.
2. **Glandular Ulcers** affect the pink, bottom 2/3 of the stomach and most commonly the last 1/3 which is known as the Pyloric Antrum. Ulcers here form slowly and reflect a failure of the mucus coat that protects glandular tissue from acid. The mechanism of this failure is unknown but could be physical, toxic, bacterial or physiological. Clinical signs can be variable but may include weight loss and alteration in appetite.



The Procedure

In order for us to successfully visualise all parts of the horse's stomach and most importantly the lining, we need the stomach to be largely empty before we pass the camera. Therefore, the horse needs to be starved of any food for at least 8 hours prior to the procedure. We encourage owners to bring the horse in to us here at the clinic the night before the Gastroscopy is due to take place and we can ensure this is done for you.

Gastroscopy is carried out under standing sedation within our safe, purpose-built stocks. They tolerate the procedure very well this way and all enjoy a lovely warm mash once we are finished, and they have woken up!

The camera is passed up the horse's nose and they are encouraged to swallow, enabling the camera to travel down the oesophagus and quickly into the stomach where the examination can take place. Images are captured at specific points around the stomach and any lesions noted are graded and defined by type.

Following the examination, a treatment plan and associated management can be devised and discussed and a report with photographic images written up detailing all aspects. Treatment is usually one month long and followed up by a repeat examination and gastroscopy to ensure that the ulcers are fully resolved.

Horses which come in for Gastroscopy are largely Outpatients and can be collected the same day as the procedure is carried out.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you are concerned that your horse may be suffering from Gastric Ulcers. We are always happy to discuss things with you and advise as to whether we feel Gastroscopy would be beneficial.

