

# Talk About Cushing's!



Equine Cushing's Disease, also known as Pars Pituitary Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID), is the most common endocrine disorder in older horses and ponies<sup>1</sup>. Some estimates suggest over 15% of horses and ponies over 15 years of age are affected<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately, the initial stages of Cushing's Disease are often difficult to detect, delaying the maximum benefit of early treatment. Blood testing is increasingly used to detect the disease and confirm diagnosis, however many horses with clinical signs, including recurrent laminitis, still go undiagnosed.

To highlight the condition and support its timely diagnosis, Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica has joined forces with the British Horse Society, Redwings Horse Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare to launch the '**Talk About Cushing's (TAC)**' campaign. The initiative, which will take place throughout September and October 2011, is aimed at raising awareness of Cushing's Disease and its clinical signs which also include hirsutism (overly hairy coat, or delayed shedding). Horse owners can download a £15 money-off voucher from [www.talkaboutcushings.co.uk](http://www.talkaboutcushings.co.uk) throughout the TAC initiative, which can be redeemed through their veterinary practice against blood test costs.



"More than 80% of horses suffering from laminitis may have an underlying hormone disorder, such as Cushing's Disease<sup>3</sup>," comments Craig Beck, veterinary surgeon at Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica. "The TAC campaign will raise awareness of Cushing's Disease and its consequences amongst horse owners, and encourage them to agree to a blood test in horses. An early diagnosis in a horse with reoccurring laminitis gives a great chance at timely treatment of the condition."

Lee Hackett, head of welfare at the BHS, adds: "Cushing's Disease is relatively common in horses yet in our experience it frequently goes undiagnosed and untreated. This is why we are fully behind the 'Talk About Cushing's' campaign – anything that raises awareness and understanding of this disease has to be of benefit to equine welfare."



Redwings' head of veterinary services Nicky Jarvis adds: "At Redwings we have many horses over the age of 15, all living very happy and healthy lives. 'Old age' is not in itself a disease so when a geriatric horse loses condition or appears unwell there is always an underlying cause. If your horse continually succumbs to laminitis or loses weight, Cushing's Disease could be one explanation. However, with early diagnosis, good management and the correct treatment a horse with Cushing's can live comfortably for many years. We would encourage anyone with concerns to contact their vet as soon as possible."

"Early diagnosis of Cushing's Disease can be of great benefit, other conditions such as laminitis are often associated with it and it is important that clinical signs are recognised and treated appropriately. World Horse Welfare supports the 'Talk About Cushing's' campaign as it will help people to recognise the signs and take the right action to prevent horses from suffering," concludes Tony Tyler, deputy chief executive, World Horse Welfare.

For further information on TAC or Cushing's Disease please visit [www.talkaboutcushings.co.uk](http://www.talkaboutcushings.co.uk) or contact your veterinary surgeon.

## References

- 1 Donaldson *et al.* "Evaluation of suspected pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction in horses with laminitis". JAVMA, Vol 224, No. 7, April 1, 2004
- 2 McGowan. "Diagnostic and Management Protocols for Equine Cushings Syndrome" *In Practice*, November/December 2003
- 3 McGowan. "Epidemiology and Clinical Perspectives of Endocrinopathic Laminitis", BEVA Congress 2009