



**ASHBROOK**  
**EQUINE HOSPITAL**

# NEWSLETTER

WINTER | DECEMBER 2024





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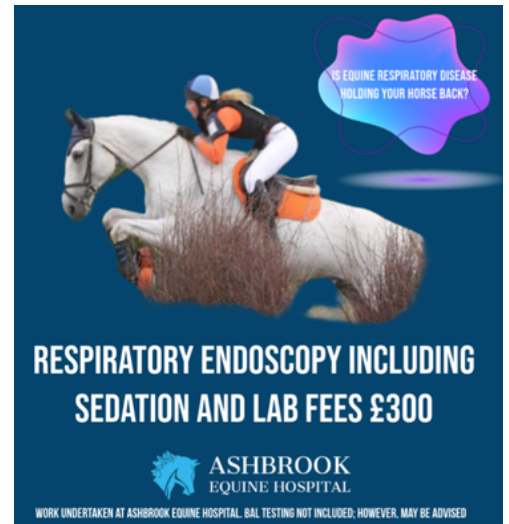


# Our Quarterly Update

## Respiratory endoscopy offer

As winter begins to bite and horses are spending more time inside and eating increasing amounts of preserved forage, we are seeing more horses with mild coughs, sometimes even just a couple of non-productive coughs at the start of exercise. We do know that horses and ponies with untreated coughs are less likely to perform well and this can worsen any low grade lung damage, creating long term problems. Accurate diagnosis can allow us to treat your horse or pony more appropriately, ensuring the quickest and best outcome possible.

If you are worried about coughing, infectious disease, underlying asthma or any problems please don't hesitate to discuss with our vets on 01565723030.



IS EQUINE RESPIRATORY DISEASE HOLDING YOUR HORSE BACK?

**RESPIRATORY ENDOSCOPY INCLUDING SEDATION AND LAB FEES £300**

**ASHBROOK EQUINE HOSPITAL**

WORK UNDERTAKEN AT ASHBROOK EQUINE HOSPITAL. BAL TESTING NOT INCLUDED; HOWEVER, MAY BE ADVISED



## Exciting news

We're delighted that not one, but two of our vets are expecting new arrivals in 2025! Vets Millie and Hannah will be beginning maternity leave over the Christmas period. We're so excited that the next generation of team Ashbrook will be born in 2025 and wish each of the new families all the very best for their impending arrivals.

## Acupuncture

We are delighted that over the last year, Nikki has been increasing her acupuncture case load and seeing some very favourable results. Nikki will always examine a horse or pony thoroughly to ascertain there are no underlying problems that require traditional veterinary medicine input, before focussing on acupuncture points and treatment of these. Usually a course of acupuncture involves 2-4 visits and, at only £70 + VAT, this represents great value for money. This work can be done in clinic or at a visit and if there are multiple horses on a visit, we will always offer our 5 horses = free visit discount to help.

## Watch this space...

We will be hosting some great client evenings during 2025, focussing on:

- Gastric ulceration
- Laminitis
- Infectious respiratory disease

**Watch out for them and make sure you get your space booked early - dinner will be included!!**

## Exciting new budgeting package

We will be offering an exciting new budgeting package to help ensure all your horse's routine veterinary needs are covered - they'll be advertised on our social media channels and website soon!

## Equine Herpes Virus (EHV) - Don't forget

Herpes (EHV) can cause late-term abortion and is common in horses. To protect your mare and unborn foal, we recommend EHV vaccination at months 5, 7, and 9 of pregnancy. Call us on 01565 723030 to book an appointment.



# Keeping your horse healthy in the colder months

As the temperature drops and winter approaches, it's important for horse owners to take proactive steps to maintain their horse's health. Cold weather can pose specific challenges to horses, making it essential to be vigilant for signs of illness that may arise during this time.

Here's a guide to help you keep your horse healthy and recognise potential health issues early on:

## **Weight loss or poor body condition:**

It's normal for horses to lose some weight in winter and it can even be beneficial. As long as the weight loss is gradual and not excessive, there's no need to worry. However, if the horse is losing weight rapidly or to the point of visible ribs, it may indicate a problem that needs veterinary attention.

## **Lethargy or decreased activity:**

A normally active horse showing signs of lethargy or reluctance to move may be unwell. Monitor energy levels and enthusiasm for activities.

## **Respiratory issues:**

Coughing, nasal discharge, or increased respiratory rate can indicate respiratory infections or issues exacerbated by cold, damp conditions or increased time stabled.

## **Digestive upsets:**

Diarrhoea, colic symptoms (restlessness, pawing, rolling), or changes in manure consistency should be promptly addressed as they can indicate digestive disturbances often linked to weather changes or dietary adjustments.

## **Joint stiffness or lameness:**

Cold weather can exacerbate joint stiffness or discomfort, especially in older horses or those prone to arthritis. Watch for stiffness, uneven gait, or reluctance to move.

## **Hoof problems:**

Monitor for signs of thrush, abscesses, or cracks, which can worsen in wet or muddy conditions typical of winter.

**By being proactive and observant, horse owners can significantly reduce the risk of cold weather related illnesses and maintain their horses' overall health during the winter months. Early detection of symptoms and contacting your vet as soon as possible, allows for prompt intervention, ensuring your horse enjoys a safe and healthy winter.**

**Remember, each horse is unique, so understanding their individual needs and behaviours is crucial in maintaining their wellbeing year-round.**







# Supporting senior horses through winter

Caring for senior horses during the winter requires extra attention to their health and comfort, as they face unique challenges due to age-related issues. Older horses may struggle with maintaining body weight, regulating body temperature and staying mobile in colder months. Seeking guidance on nutrition is key, as senior horses often require a tailored diet to meet their changing needs. High-quality senior feed, access to easy-to-chew forage and appropriate supplements can help older horses maintain weight and overall health during the winter.

In addition to nutrition, it's important to ensure senior horses are kept warm and dry. Many older horses have a reduced ability to regulate their body temperature, making appropriate rugging and/or adequate shelter essential. Having a dry, windproof shelter helps protect senior horses from the cold, rain and wind, reducing stress on their ageing bodies.

Older horses who suffer with arthritis and joint stiffness can worsen in the cold, so regular gentle movement and turnout are important to keep them comfortable. Seeking guidance on joint health supplements, light exercise and even treatments like massage or acupuncture can go a long way towards improving their quality of life. Additionally, regular health monitoring — checking for dehydration, dental issues and signs of illness — helps prevent small problems from becoming serious over the winter months.

By focusing on these areas, you can keep your senior horses healthy, comfortable, and happy through the colder season.

**If you're concerned about your senior horse's health or behaviour, don't hesitate to contact us for further guidance.**





# Equine Clicker Training for Stress-Free Vet Visits



## Steps to introduce clicker training for vet visits:

1. Introduce the clicker: Start in a calm environment, associating clicks with rewards
2. Teach calm standing: Reward relaxed standing, gradually increasing duration
3. Desensitise to tools: Introduce vet tools calmly, rewarding relaxed reactions
4. Teach targeting: Guide horse movements with a target object
5. Vet-specific behaviours: Practise behaviours like head lowering or leg offering
6. Realistic scenarios: Simulate vet visits to reinforce training



## Benefits of clicker training for vet visits:

- Improved compliance: Calmer, cooperative behaviour during exams
- Boosted confidence: Builds horse confidence and trust
- Stronger bond: Enhances horse-human relationship

Clicker training is used to make nervous horses less anxious and can be useful for helping you prepare for a vet visit. It is a reward-based approach that can help horses have a positive association with vet visits.

**Learn how clicker training can make vet appointments smoother:**

### What is clicker training?

Clicker training uses a noise-making device to mark desired behaviour, followed by a treat, reinforcing positive outcomes and encouraging repetition. The end desired behaviour is broken down into small achievable steps that can be worked on in short sessions, hopefully progressing each time

### Why use clicker training for vet visits?

#### Reduce stress:

Turns stressful moments into games, building positive associations.

#### Cooperative behaviour:

Teaches behaviours useful during examinations, like standing still or offering a leg.

#### Improved communication:


Enhances understanding between horse and handler, reducing resistance.

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### Tips for success:

- Short sessions: Keep training brief to avoid fatigue
- Consistency: Click immediately for desired behaviours
- Moderate treats: Use small treats to avoid overfeeding
- Don't overface your horse: start with something achievable e.g. standing relaxed when you touch the top of the leg and be guided by the horse with how fast to progress

**Clicker training equips your horse for stress-free vet visits, ensuring future appointments are efficient and positive for all.**



# Equine nerve and joint blocks: What they are and how they work

One of the most valuable diagnostic tools our vets use to pinpoint sources of pain in horses are techniques called 'nerve blocking' or 'joint blocking'. Whether you're dealing with a subtle lameness or a more obvious injury, nerve and joint blocks provide critical information, allowing us to accurately identify the specific area of discomfort and guide treatment accordingly.

## What Is a nerve block?

A nerve block involves the temporary desensitisation of specific nerves to isolate the location of pain. We inject a local anaesthetic near a nerve to stop pain signals from reaching the brain, and if the horse's lameness improves after the injection, we can assume that the pain originates from the region below that nerve.

For example, in a horse presenting with lameness in a forelimb, we might begin by blocking the lower areas of the limb and work our way upward in stages. If the lameness diminishes after blocking the lower limb, we know the problem likely originates in the foot or pastern. If no improvement is seen, we move higher up the leg and block the nerves higher up the leg, gradually narrowing down the source of pain.

## Common nerve blocks:

- **Palmar digital nerve block:** Local anaesthetic is injected around the nerves on the back of the lower pastern, abolishing pain in most of the foot
- **Abaxial sesamoid nerve block:** Local anaesthetic is injected around the nerves at the back of the fetlock, abolishing sensation below the fetlock, in the foot and pastern

- **Low four point block:** Local anaesthetic is injected around two pairs of nerves above the fetlock, abolishing sensation to the fetlock and below
- **High four point block:** Local anaesthetic is injected into four sites just below the knee (carpus), abolishing sensation from the cannon area and below.

**By systematically blocking these nerves, we work toward the root cause of the lameness.**

## What Is a joint block?

A joint block, or intra-articular block, involves injecting local anaesthetic directly into a specific joint. This helps determine whether the pain is coming from the joint itself, rather than the surrounding soft tissues. Joint blocks are particularly useful in cases where we suspect arthritis or other joint-related issues like synovitis.





### **How are nerve and joint blocks performed?**

Before performing either a nerve or joint block, the horse is typically walked or trotted to assess the baseline level of lameness. The injection site is then carefully prepared, usually by cleaning and disinfecting the area to minimise infection risk, which is especially important for joint blocks. The anaesthetic is injected, often using sterile techniques and the horse is re-evaluated for any changes in gait or soundness.

The time taken to see the effects of the block depend on the block but typically are 5-20 minutes. By comparing the horse's movement before and after each block, we can effectively narrow down the cause of lameness.

### **Why are nerve and joint blocks so important?**

Nerve and joint blocks are critical diagnostic tools because many lameness issues can be subtle or involve multiple regions of the limb. Without these blocks, identifying the specific site of pain can be extremely challenging, especially in cases where imaging (like x-rays or ultrasound) may not immediately reveal the problem.

Accurate diagnosis through these techniques helps veterinarians provide more effective and targeted treatments, whether it's rest, medication, corrective shoeing or even surgery.

**As equine vets, our goal is always to get your horse back to full health and nerve and joint blocks play a key role in making that possible.**