



# Parys Dierehospitaal

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Hello horsey people!! Today's topic is Stomach Ulcers in horses. Yes. Horses get them too...and for much the same reasons as people do!

A stomach ulcer is basically a sore on the inside of the stomach. They can be tiny. They can be HUGE. They can be non-painful, or they can be very very uncomfortable and can have a huge impact on a horse's performance!

Why do horses get them? Stress, intermittent feeding, heavy exercise or a lack of exercise, some medication causes ulcers. There are lots of reasons why horses get them. How do you see when a horse has ulcers? We often make a presumptive diagnosis based on the behaviour of the horse, but the only way to know for sure is to do an endoscopy. When we do an endoscopy, we sedate the horse and pass a special tube with a camera attached to the end all the way into the stomach and have a look around inside the stomach if we can see any of them. The symptoms that we can see on the outside include weight loss, irritability and changes in the attitude, resistance under saddle, loss of appetite, not finishing their food and looking uncomfortable just after they have eaten, reduced energy levels, discomfort around their flanks and often showing a dislike of being brushed around the flanks or having their blanket put on. Some horses with very severe ulcers can show mild colic symptoms especially after eating and can also become pale (anaemic) if the ulcers start to bleed. They can indeed be life threatening! If a stomach ulcer makes a hole all the way through the stomach the stomach acids leak into the abdomen causing peritonitis which can be fatal in horses. So how do we prevent them? Know your horse! Know what behaviour is normal for them and when their behaviour changes all of the sudden. High strung horses that are nervous by nature are more at risk of developing ulcers. Other way to reduce the risk of your horse developing ulcers: make sure your horse always has hay! Horses should never have an empty stomach. Do not exercise your horse on an empty stomach. We all know not to exercise our horses just after they have had their concentrates, but a horse should get a bit of grass or lucerne to eat before you exercise your horse. Place feed bins on the ground to help simulate the natural feeding position which helps to stimulate the chewing action which increases the production of saliva. Help to reduce your horse's stress levels especially during competition season. Do not use non-steroidal anti-inflammatories such as phenylbutazone, metacam, finadyne or inflacam without the guidance of a vet and do not use these drugs for too long at once. If you suspect that your horse may have ulcers, please have a chat to us so we can help. The longer the ulcers are there the worse they get and the longer they take to heal.

Have a lovely horsey day! 🐾 ☐

Dr Marleece

Parys Animal Hospital.