

## Casebook news at Priors Farm

### What is IRAP?

Osteoarthritis, degenerative joint disease (DJD) is one of the most serious causes of lameness in horses and it starts when cartilage in joints is damaged producing inflammation and pain. Joints commonly affected are the hock, fetlock, coffin and knees. Usually, therapy involves intra-articular medications such as hyaluronic acid and/or steroids, rest, NSAIDS (bute), polysulphated glycosaminoglycans (PSGAGs) such as "Adequan", intravenous hyaluronate ("Hyonate"), and oral supplements containing glucosamine and/or chondroitin sulphate.

Treatment with Interleukin-1 (IL-1) Receptor Antagonist Protein, IRAP for short, uses autologous conditioned serum to combat osteoarthritis in the joint. IL-1 is a cytokine secreted by cells of the immune system to attack infections and damaged or dying cells. An important part of the inflammatory response, it can be detrimental by accelerating deterioration of cartilage. IRAP blocks IL-1 from binding to tissues.

The procedure starts with sterile collection of blood in a syringe containing special glass beads that stimulate production of IL-1. After incubation and centrifuging, IRAP rich plasma is repeatedly injected into the joint under stringent aseptic control. Usually, IRAP treatments are given once a week for three weeks and **in our hands** have been **remarkably effective** with horses returning to normal work.

Case selection is crucial and IRAP is for joint disease where no x-ray change can be seen but pain has been localised exclusively to the joint. It is no substitute for surgery where fragments must be taken out or where broken ligamentous structures are irritating the joint and need delicate removal. The reason IRAP is exciting is its potential long-term effect on cartilage.

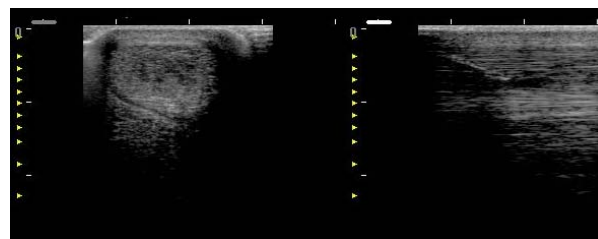


Teamwork: Gemma, Sam and Duncan with one of those trickier nerve blocks!

Research on IRAP continues but early results have been very encouraging. Please get in touch **if you think your horse might be a candidate for IRAP** or have any questions.

### Stem cell therapy

This elegant technology is now established as an effective method of treating tendon lesions, dramatically reducing the recurrence that we all dread. At last, we have a method of regenerating tendon fibres. The undifferentiated ("stem") cells are separated and cultured at a specialist laboratory from bone marrow taken from the sternum. After a sometimes frustratingly long time (up to 3 weeks) where quality and numbers of stem cells are established, they are injected back into the core lesions seen on the scan. After these procedures, a prolonged controlled exercise period is started that is every bit as important as the original implantation of stem cells. Both harvesting and implantation of stem cells take place **at Priors Farm**. The scan picture below shows a core lesion on transverse view on the left and in longitudinal view on the right. The diagonal bright white line on the right is a needle passed into the lesion under ultrasound guidance to inject the cells.



### Triplets?

For the first time for an unmentionable number of years during routine scanning of mares for early pregnancy, Philip was surprised to find not two but three foetal sacs. Previously he was aware of only one previous incident of triple conception but his excitement was short lived when he found that Madeleine Campbell, specialist in equine reproduction based in nearby Duddleswell, was aware of several instances this year alone. All the same, a remarkable occurrence.

This year has been a bumper one for AI at Priors Farm with excellent fertility results thanks to persistent and attentive effort from all the team, especially Duncan and Ben.

**EVERYONE AT PRIORS FARM  
WISHES YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS AND HEALTHY NEW  
YEAR!**

# Winter at Priors Farm

**PRIORS FARM EQUINE SURGERY LTD**

**01342 823011**

**MALTHOUSE BARN EQUINE CLINIC**

**01273 890700**

**www.priorsfarm.co.uk**

## New! Extended hours for routine work

Many clients have asked us for routine veterinary care outside normal working hours. So many of us have to work during the week and find taking time off to sort out our animals is simply not



feasible. Our answer to this request has been until now that we can only provide emergency cover within our catchment area with one available veterinary surgeon. **From Wednesday 2nd January 2008**, we will extend the times for routine veterinary care before 8.30 am and after 5.30 pm from Monday to Thursday. Please ask when you ring for an appointment and the staff will try to find a helpful time with no 'out of hours' charge.

Of course, there will still be a separate veterinary surgeon on duty for emergencies but if you need a vaccination, routine dental work or some other relatively quick procedure carried out, you may be able to have it at a time of the day that may suit you better. Similarly, you might have an enquiry where you would like to speak to a vet in person and receive advice about how to proceed.

There is no such thing as a stupid question where horses are concerned and the biggest mistake of all can be to 'assume'. **Please make use of this information service** as it is free of charge and we will always try to answer your call quickly or make sure you are called back without delay.

## Changes in the practice over the last thirty years



Those of you who have been with the practice for more than a few years may remember the old Nissen hut on the way into Priors Farm. This legacy from WWII gave way in 1997 to the oak barn you see today on the same footings. The practice

started life in Upper Hartfield in 1978 so next year will see its **30th anniversary**. As it enters its fourth decade, it continues to look at modern advances and improve the service.

Within the next few weeks, we will be introducing new practice computer software that will change and improve the appearance of the invoices and reports that you receive.

We will do our best to keep continuity but there will be a different layout from the one that you have become used to over the years.



Behind the scenes, the change will improve the way we archive documents and images as well as help us keep better tabs on stock levels and integrate the new methods of communication that have become universal in the space of

a few years, such as email and text messaging. We welcome any comments from you when the new documents appear; you will see a change in all our stationery and our website and we look forward to your hearing your feedback.

We have recently upgraded our surgical facilities and will make increased use of the various specialist surgeons who have agreed to come and operate in our theatre. We are fortunate enough to

### Changes in the practice over the last thirty years, continued

...have top quality surgeons available to come to Priors Farm for many elective surgical procedures. The advantage to you is that you are less likely to have to travel the substantial distances often required for specialist surgery and it will usually be more convenient for you to come and visit your horse after the operation. We have excellent expert support from Reynolds House Referrals based in Newmarket and from the Royal Veterinary College, London.



### Acupuncture

Building on a long held interest in acupuncture, Ben recently completed the advanced course in veterinary acupuncture organised by the association of British Veterinary Acupuncturists. Our chief goal at Priors Farm is to reintroduce acupuncture into the rehabilitation of horses suffering from chronic orthopaedic problems or myofascial pain syndrome, just as we did when Scott McGinness worked for us. Many of these horses have problems that manifest themselves as poor performance or altered demeanour, if not overt lameness. Low grade hindlimb lameness or back pain is often involved in the development of primary or secondary myofascial pain; such signs have long been observed among people suffering from chronic orthopaedic problems and they are increasingly being recognized in the equine population.

The growing body of scientific evidence to explain the action of acupuncture and promising anecdotal reports of its clinical results make it potentially useful for a number of conditions. Do please phone the office and **Speak to Ben** for further information or to **book a free initial consultation.**

### Case continuity



Wherever possible, we try to make sure that the vet who first deals with your problem continues to see it through until its conclusion. In extreme cases, this can result in more than one vet from our practice coming to the same yard, each one to see a different case. Although this must horrify those compulsive efficiency gurus among you, it is for the perfectly good reason that most people prefer to see the same vet consistently from the start of diagnosis and treatment. Some practices will simply not permit this but we firmly believe at Priors Farm that you should have the choice because it is your animal and you are paying the bill.

### Continuing professional development (CPD)

There was a time when it was enough for vets to read their journals and occasionally attend talks and courses. Nowadays, this process is strictly regulated and every veterinary surgeon must attend a minimum of five days every year at a recognised CPD course. The body for horse vets is the British Equine Veterinary Association, BEVA.



Recently, Ben, Duncan and Gemma attended the BEVA course on artificial insemination, Duncan attended the highly successful orthopaedics course at Willesley Equine Clinic in Gloucestershire and Alison and Philip attended the two day forelimb lameness and advanced imaging course at Newmarket, the successor to the hind limb lameness course last year. The importance of keeping up to date cannot be overemphasised but equally, we never forget that not everyone wishes to take out a second mortgage for an uninsured horse! We will always discuss with you the pros and cons of extensive examination or treatment and try to find the most suitable path in the circumstances.

**Don't forget our comprehensive information at [www.priorsfarm.co.uk](http://www.priorsfarm.co.uk)!**

### Please don't forget your tack if coming in for a lameness examination



Alison prepares to block a sacro-iliac joint

One of the commonest reasons for bringing your horse to Priors Farm is for a lameness examination. It is much easier to diagnose a severe acute lameness than a chronic or more subtle one; it is very helpful to see a subtle lameness case ridden. Staff will usually prompt you to remember to bring your own tack but even if they don't, or you don't think you need it, please bring it anyway.

### Veterinary talks and hands on demonstrations

We are currently planning a lecture with a forelimb dissection (not for the faint hearted) in conjunction with West End Riding Club that will probably be at Plumpton College or Malthouse Barn.

We are also organising a talk at Priors Farm on feeding and frequent dental problems in conjunction with a major horse feed company. We are aiming to arrange both of these in late January or early February 2008 and further details will be sent to you and placed on the web site:

[www.priorsfarm.co.uk](http://www.priorsfarm.co.uk)

Remember, each of the vets can be emailed using **firstname.secondname** in front of [@priorsfarm.co.uk](mailto:@priorsfarm.co.uk):

- philip.glyn
- alison.weston
- duncan.harrison
- ben.chilvers
- emma.dransfield

### Poisoning and other serious hazards for horses



Yew *Taxus baccata*

Ask many people what the commonest cause of sudden unexpected death is in a horse and they might say 'heart-attack', 'colic' or 'road accident'. In actual fact, where the cause can be found, it is much more likely to be Yew poisoning or electric shock. Again, many people would say 'ragwort' if you asked them to name the commonest poisonous plant important for horses. This rather morbid subject is not a cheerful one this Christmas and with many people taking a cynical view of the sometimes heavy-handed health and safety legislation that surrounds us, it is easy to forget just how dangerous these things are. It does not mean that you should take a chainsaw to every Yew tree in the neighbourhood nor should you run round switching everything electrical off; it just means that you should be aware of these dangers and take sensible precautions. Horses are pretty sensible about what they graze and will not normally chew plants that taste bitter but we have seen horses inexplicably suddenly chew a Yew tree that has been within reach for years. Sometimes the protective bitter taste has been lost, for example in wilted ragwort or Yew that has fallen or been cut from a tree or hedge. Remember, the Yew may not be obvious - it could be tucked in a hedge or out of immediate view. How much Yew must a horse eat for it to be life-threatening? The answer - about a matchbox full.

Similarly, do not allow your horse to walk across a live electric cable. It sounds ridiculous to have to mention this but, amazingly, one frequently sees shod horses walking across extension cables on the ground. The metal of their shoes makes a perfect conductor (better than our usually rubber soles) as well as acting as a chisel to cut through the insulator surrounding the wire. A well maintained yard will have a residual current device ("trip") fitted but it is not a good idea to find out by walking your horse across the wire first.