The Modern Equine Vet

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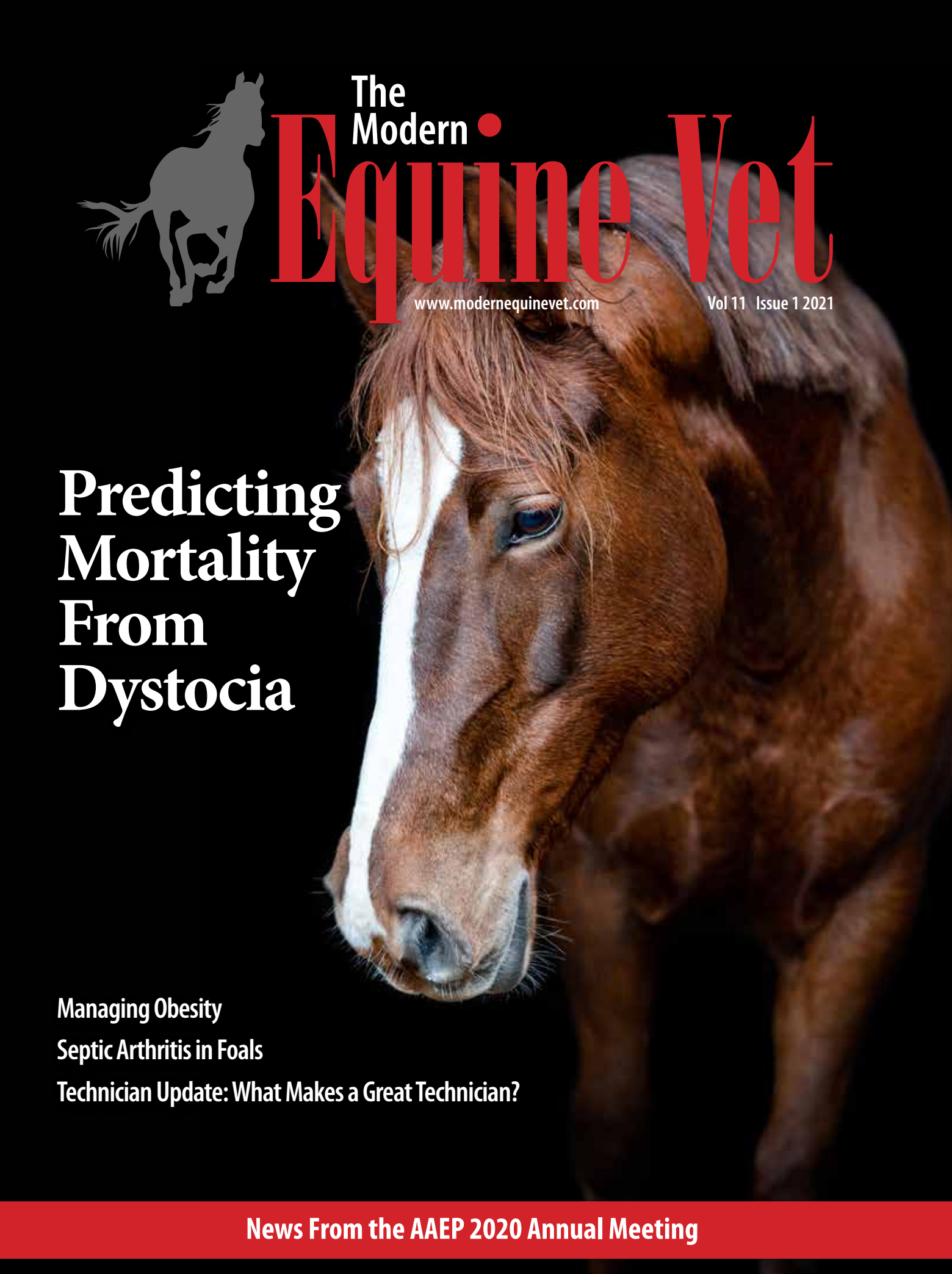
Predicting Mortality From Dystocia



Managing Obesity

Septic Arthritis in Foals

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SALES: Matthew Todd • Matthew Gerald

EDITOR: Marie Rosenthal

ART DIRECTOR: Jennifer Barlow

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Paul Basillo • Adam Marcus

COPY EDITOR: Patty Wall

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3 Burba DJ, Collier MA, DeBault LE, Hanson-Painton O, Thompson HC, Holder CL: In vivo kinetic study on uptake and distribution of intramuscular tritium-labeled polysulfated glycosaminoglycan in equine body fluid compartments and articular cartilage in an osteochondral defect model. *J Equine Vet Sci* 1993; 13: 696-703.

4 Kim DY, Taylor HW, Moore RM, Paulsen DB, Cho DY. Articular chondrocyte apoptosis in equine osteoarthritis. The Veterinary Journal 2003; 166: 52-57.

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Can Recumbency Status Predict Mortality in Dystocia?

Dystocia resolution is not the time for lollygagging.

The normal duration for stage II parturition in the mare is about 20 minutes—foal survival has been shown to decrease dramatically 40 minutes after the mare's water breaks.

"Every 10-minute increase in time after the initial 30 minutes after breaking water results in a 16% decrease in foal survival," said **Heather Roe**, DVM, resident in surgery at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine. "Every minute during dystocia resolution is invaluable."

Some prior research has shown that prolonged stage II parturition does impact mortality. While most dystocia discussion in the literature is focused on foal survival, not many studies look at mare outcomes.

Examining Survival

Dr. Roe and her colleagues created a retrospective study to examine mare and foal survival following dystocia. In particular, they looked at mare recumbency as a potential prognostic indicator for survival.

"As practitioners, we tend to correlate recumbency with an increased severity of disease," she said during a virtual presentation sponsored by Merck Animal Health at the 66th Annual AAEP Convention. "Mares

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By Paul Basilio

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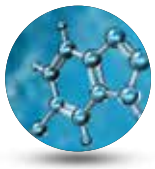

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[1] PANACUR (fenbendazole) POWERPAC equine dewormer product label.
[2] Reinemeyer CR, Vaala, WE. Larvicidal efficacy of fenbendazole against a macrocyclic lactone-resistant isolate of Parascaris equorum in foals. Proceedings of the 55th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Veterinary Parasitologists. 2010, Atlanta, GA, p49.
[3] Lacey E. Mode of Action of Benzimidazoles. *Parasitology Today*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1990.

The Science of
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can be recumbent for prolonged periods during dystocia management, and there's currently very little literature that discusses recumbency and dystocia simultaneously."

3 GOALS of Dystocia Management

1	2	3
Birth of a live foal	Mare survival	Preserve reproductive soundness

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The Study

The team hypothesized that mares who were recumbent at the time of hospital admission for dystocia management would have decreased survival rates vs. ambulatory mares. In addition, they believed that foals delivered from recumbent mares would be less likely to survive.

They collected retrospective data from more than 1,000 mares that presented to an equine referral hospital in Lexington, Ky., from 1995 to 2018. Some mares presented more than once during the study period.

Of the total, 86% were Thoroughbreds, but a large variety of breeds were represented. Median age was 10 years, with a range of 2 to 30 years, according to Dr. Roe.

They found that only 41 mares presented for dystocia resolution in recumbency. Most of the cases were resolved with assisted vaginal delivery, and a few were resolved with assisted delivery and fetotomy alone.

The overall mare survival rate was about 91%, with a 37% foal survival rate. For recumbent mares, the survival rate fell to 58.5%—foals from recumbent mares had a 7.3% survival rate, and only 4.9% survived to discharge.

The difference in time of stage II parturition between foal survival and nonsurvival was 16 minutes, which tracks with previous research.

"For foals, time is of the essence," Dr. Roe said. "Oxygen delivery to the foal ceases once the separation of the attachment between the uterus and placenta occurs. Fetal asphyxiation leads to complications and death. Additional trauma sustained from prolonged extraction attempts can lead to other life-threatening consequences, including rib fractures and body wall rupture."

For mares, the stage II parturition time difference between survival and non-survival was 55 minutes.

"If you prolonged dystocia for 55 minutes after breaking water, you are endangering the mare's life," she added. "Traumatic, extended attempts to extract the fetus can lead to irreparable damage to the mare's reproductive tract."

Of the 41 mares who were recumbent in this study, 39 presented with the foal hip-locked or partially hanging out. The longer the manipulation of the fetus and the harder the pulling, the more likely a partially delivered or hip-locked fetus is to occur.

"Intervention in dystocia should only proceed as long as progress is made," Dr. Roe said.

The Aging Mare

As mares age, their reproductive efficiency decreases, so it is vital to do minimal harm to the reproductive tract to preserve future reproductive soundness. One study showed that for owners to see a positive financial return on a broodmare, the horse must produce a live foal in 6 of every 7 years.

"Broodmares not only hold sentimental value, but for most they are an investment," Dr. Roe added.

The most important take-home from their study is that "mare recumbency during dystocia is a poor prognostic indicator for both the mare and the foal," she said.

Because of this, Dr. Roe recommended that an efficient dystocia protocol should be implemented at every hospital that treats dystocia. The horse's caregivers must be educated about exactly when to call for help, and how life-threatening and expensive protracted dystocia can be.

"From the hospital standpoint, every additional minute it takes to extract the foal adds to the total time in stage II labor," Dr. Roe said. "The hospital needs to properly train its staff, the supplies should be set in advance, and the appropriate personnel should be readily available, including the support staff for the neonate." **MeV**

Study: Damper Diet Linked to Better Airway Health in Racehorses

By Adam Marcus

Racehorses fed haylage show fewer markers of mild asthma than if they eat conventional, dry forage, new research shows.

The study, presented at the 2020 virtual meeting of the American Association of Equine Practitioners, found that the damp-hay diet was linked to lower levels of immune activity than dry hay. Animals provided steamed hay also appeared to benefit, although the effect did not reach statistical significance, according to the researchers.

"We think that if we had enrolled more horses and/or given more time, we would have likely detected the benefit," said **Laurent Couetil**, DVM, PhD, professor of large animal medicine at the Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine, in West Lafayette, Ind., who led the study.

Previous pilot studies have suggested that moist hays can reduce markers of airway inflammation, but Dr. Couetil's group wanted to confirm the effect in the real-world setting of the racetrack.

Haylage has at least 2 advantages over conventional hay, Couetil said. With a moisture content of between 30% and 40%, it's about twice as damp as regular hay. "As a result, horses are exposed to a much lower dust level," he told *Modern Equine Vet*. "Also, the nutritional value of haylage is closer to fresh grass and that seems to be another important factor explaining its beneficial effect on lung health."

For the study, Couetil and his colleagues randomly assigned 73 racehorses to receive either hay, steamed hay or haylage for 6 weeks. They performed broncheoalveolar lavage at the start of the study and at weeks 3 and 6, testing the fluid for markers of inflammation including neutrophils and mast cells. They also measured breathable dust around the animals using gravimetric analysis on 2 occasions during the study period.

Data were available for 69 horses at week 3, and 53 at week 6 of the study. Both steamed hay and haylage were associated with a reduction in breathable dust compared with conventional forage (P=0.05), the researchers found. Horses fed haylage had fewer neutrophils in their lavage fluid at weeks 3 (P=0.025) and 6 (P=0.003) compared with baseline and with hay (P=0.04 for week 6). They also experienced a drop in the share of mast cells in their lavage fluid, but only at week 3 (P=0.08), according to the researchers.

The researchers did not observe any clinical improvements in the horses in the study, but that wasn't surprising, Couetil said, since the animals were all healthy at the start of the trial. "The issue with mild equine asthma is that most horses do not show clinical signs at rest except for a few with intermittent coughing, and they usually train normally," he said. "The problem is that they don't perform well during racing. Therefore, this disease is insidious and can be unnoticed for some time."

In the United States, haylage is less common—and therefore more expensive—than conventional forage, Dr. Couetil said. Wrapped rolls also are prone to puncture, which can introduce mold and, in rare cases, botulism. "Vaccination would help prevent this possibility, as well as proper harvesting technique," he noted. On the other hand, haylage is easy to store and horses seem to like the smell.

Dr. Couetil said he and his colleagues "were glad to see a positive effect on airway inflammation in a real-life situation, when nothing else was changed. Therefore, it is possible to help horses achieve their full potential just by changing the source of forage." **MeV**

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For the Overweight Horse, Every Day is Thanksgiving

By Adam Marcus

Although portly horses need to be put on a diet, it must be done safely, according **Megan Shepherd**, DVM, PhD, a clinical assistant professor at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, in Blacksburg, Va.

The problem is far from purely aesthetic. Overweight horses are prone to a range of potentially serious health problems. The most serious of these is laminitis, but reproductive efficiency and tolerance to heat also can be affected, Dr. Shepherd said at the 2020 virtual meeting of the American Association of Equine Practitioners.

The assessment of body weight in horses generally is done using a 9-point body condition scoring system. "I often see the ribs as a focal point for body condition scoring, but it's important to consider all 6 sites," when evaluating an animal, Shepherd said.

Helping an overweight horse lose weight starts with restricting the animal's intake of dry matter. As a benchmark, owners and caregivers should aim for a target of 2% dry matter per total bodyweight of the horse per day—28 lbs. for a 1,400 lb. animal. However, because dry matter isn't perfectly dry, that amount likely will require adjustment by a few pounds for water weight.

Another important consideration is nutrient intake, as restricting total calories should not deprive horses of critical vitamins, minerals and protein. Researchers have developed a website (http://nrc88.nash.edu.html) with a calculator that will generate daily requirements for specific nutrients based on the horse's weight and other factors.

As with people, overweight horses tend to be "motivated by food," Shepherd said. So physical barriers to overeating might be necessary. These can include hay nets with smaller windows, which will slow down meals, and using grazing muzzles for animals that are at pasture. (Some horses are adept at shedding muzzles, so owners might have to experiment with several kinds before they find one that stays on, Shepherd noted.)

Another critical piece of the dieting process is monitoring. Owners or caregivers should monitor horses on meal plans every 2 to 4 weeks, using weight tape (ide-

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THE HENNEKE 9-POINT BODY CONDITION SCALE

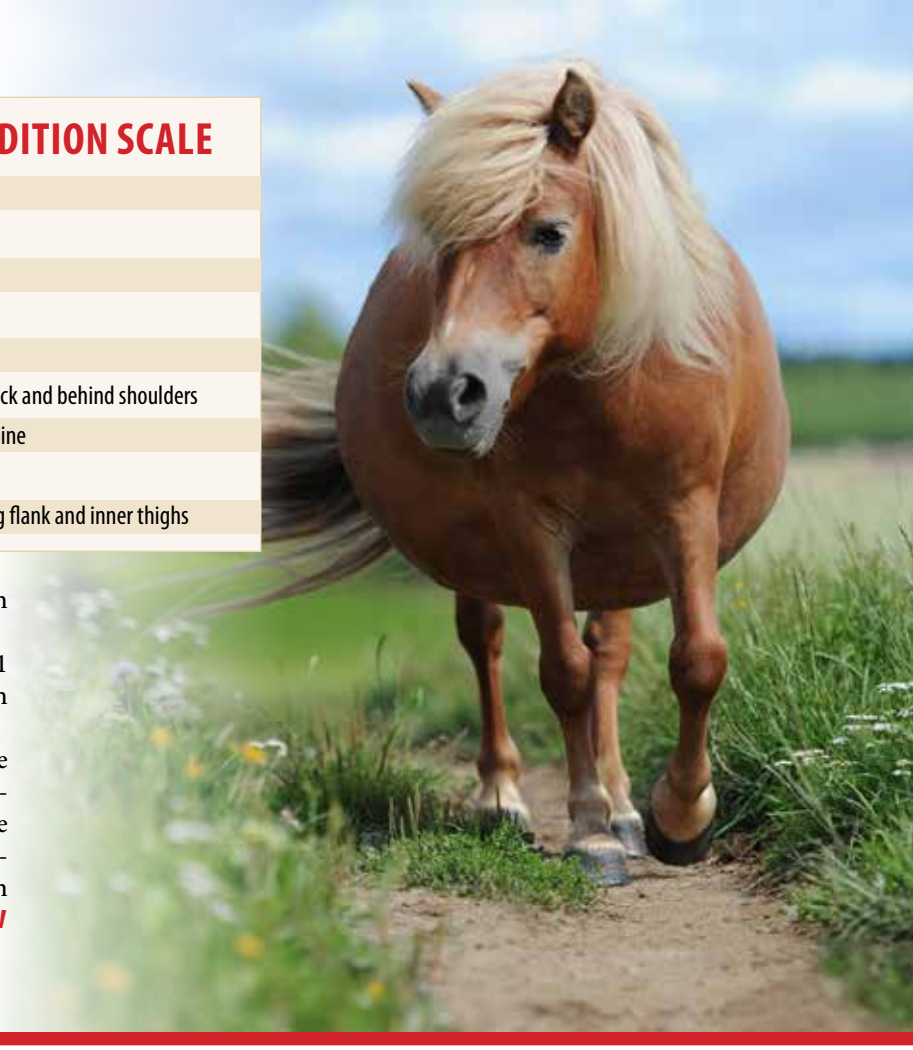
1	**POOR CONDITION:** extremely emaciated
2	**VERY THIN:** emaciated
3	**THIN:** slight fat covering the body
4	**MODERATELY THIN:** ridge of spine and rib outline visible
5	**MODERATE:** spine and ribs cannot be seen, but ribs can be felt
6	**MODERATELY FLESHY:** fat deposits showing along withers, neck and behind shoulders
7	**FLESHY:** more apparent fat, even along the crease down the spine
8	**FAT:** apparent fat along the entire animal, neck is large
9	**EXTREMELY FAT:** obvious fat along the entire animal, including flank and inner thighs

ally, the same tape and the same person measuring each time) and the body condition score.

The target weight loss should be roughly 0.5 to 1 point on the body condition score per month, which translates to approximately 25 to 50 lbs per month.

If the animal does not lose much weight, or if the weight loss plateaus, make sure the caregiver is complying with the diet, Shepherd advised. If so, restrict the amount of dry matter further—although don't drop below 1% of body weight without first consulting with an equine nutritionist. **MeV**

Shepherd's talk was sponsored by Cargill.



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Good Prognosis for Foals with Septic Arthritis

The prognosis for survival in foals with septic arthritis is good, according to a recent study from New South Wales, Australia.

Future racing performance does not appear to be affected, the researchers said. However, younger foals and those with concurrent diseases are less likely to survive.

The researchers did a retrospective study of future racing performance for 114 Thoroughbred foals (<180 days old) with septic arthritis and compared them with their maternal siblings to investigate factors associated with survival.

The foals had undergone arthroscopic, cannula or through-and-through needle lavage for the treatment of septic arthritis over a 6-year period. In addition, synovial fluid samples were obtained for cytological analysis and bacteriologic culture.

Overall, 130 synovial fluid samples were submitted for culture and cytology. Bacteriological growth was detected in 80 (61.5%; 95% CI 52.6% to 69.9%) samples. The most frequent organism isolated was *Streptococcus* (32%), followed by Enterobacteriaceae (28%) and *Staphylococcus* (15%). Thirty-nine foals (34%) required repeat lavage of the affected synovial structure, most commonly the stifle (35%) and tarsocrural joints (20%).

Ninety (78%) of 115 foals diagnosed with septic arthritis were discharged alive. Foals <26 days old at the time of admission were 5 times less likely (P=0.003) and foals with concurrent multisystemic disease were 6 times less likely (P=0.02) to be discharged alive. Sixty (67%) foals discharged alive started in at least 1 race, and there was no difference in the proportion of foals that started in a race or racing performance between foals treated for septic arthritis and their maternal siblings.

The researchers suggested that veterinarians use bacterial culture of synovial fluid samples to guide treatment, if possible. **MeV**

For more information:

O'Brien TJ, Rosanowski SM, Mitchell JB, et al. Factors associated with survival and racing performance of 114 Thoroughbred foals with septic arthritis compared to maternal siblings (2009–2015). *Equine Vet J*. 2020 Nov. 8 [Epub ahead of print].

https://beva.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/evj.13387

What Makes a Great Technician?

By Deborah B. Reeder, RVT, VTS-EVN AAEVT
Executive Director

Do you remember why you wanted to be a veterinary technician?

The professional role of the veterinary technician in a practice is a critical one—and one that should be continually evaluated to ensure expectations, needs (employer, patient and client), as well as your own personal growth requirements are being met.

To do this, we must take the opportunity to really look at ourselves, our goals and whether our careers are going to help us achieve those goals.

What makes a great technician?

Here are a few things to consider:

Values: Possessing positive values such as professionalism, attitude, appearance, work ethic, confidentiality, compassion, support, team player, leadership, mentoring, prepared, self motivated, confident, ethical, trustworthy, being respectful.

Always the student: Learning and improving skill sets are key motivators. These individuals seek out continuing education, wet labs, webinars, articles, resources, and want to improve and grow. When they go to CE. They offer to bring back an overview of what they have learned, and what might be applicable to the practice to improve a protocol, a process or a team.

Self-awareness: They evaluate their strengths and find ways to best use them or develop them further, and they are aware of their weaker areas and challenge themselves to turn a weakness into a new positive skill.

Inquiring mind: A great technician is curious, and will ask questions, or inquire about a new procedure or technology, or research on their own. They know how to think and use their head.

A clear sense of ethics: They are ethical and law abiding and are aware of state and national laws, rules and regulations and policies of their profession. They appreciate why guidelines are set and seek to only provide the highest standard of medical care.

On time: A great technician arrives on time, if not 10 minutes before their shift and is prepared to go to work; they do not show up and sit around and drink coffee for 30 minutes and gossip.

Anticipate the needs of others: They anticipate the doctor's next move, next procedure, next piece of equipment or supplies. They have vaccines drawn up and labeled, all equipment checked, prepared and organized. Paperwork and a brief exam has been done. The truck is stocked and clean, the surgery packs are complete, the inventory is on hand, the client has been called and checked in with or notified of an appointment change, so the day goes smoothly. They are observant. They look around for what needs to be done and do it, or offer to do it, before being asked.

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to take stock of your life and your career. Here are some ideas about what makes a great technician.

Flexible: Every day in an equine practice starts out with a timely, organized schedule of appointments and procedures and every day that schedule is rearranged, so flexibility is critical. They must be able to adapt, and be ready for the unexpected.

Prepared: A great technician has everything ready. They know what the appointments and procedures are for the day. They have the directions, the inventory ordered, the truck, exam room or surgery suite is organized and ready. Paperwork is filled out and ready, and the medical record is always up-to-date, complete and correct. They are making notes of everything, so there are no missed charges and they are ready to collect that payment. They know the

You know what human healthcare practitioners do for people, but do you know what ***we*** do for horses?

From doctors to nurses to x-ray technologists, there are dozens of individually regulated healthcare professionals in human medicine.

Have you ever wondered who takes on the same roles in equine medicine? Besides the DVM, who else is caring for your horse?

We'd like to introduce you to one of the members of your equine veterinary healthcare team: the **CEVT**.

Task	Human Medicine	Equine Medicine*
X-Rays	X-Ray Technologist	**CEVT**
Anesthesia	Anesthesiologist	Credentialed Equine Veterinary Technicians (CEVTs) wear many hats in equine veterinary medicine. They are regulated professionals who have been formally educated and trained, and who are passionate about providing all horses the highest level of healthcare possible.
Triage	Triage Nurse	
Assist in Surgery	O.R. Nurse	
Nutrition Consultation	Dietician	
Dispense Medication	Pharmacist	
Take and/or Test Bloodwork	Medical Lab Technologist	
Physiotherapy	Physiotherapist	

*when delegated to do so by an equine veterinarian and carried out under their supervision

Get to know *your* horse's veterinary healthcare team. Introduce yourself to a **CEVT** next time you visit your equine clinic.

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Teaching Points

OH, THE PLACES YOU CAN GO

Here are just a few of the opportunities available for technicians.

- Research
- Nutrition/ Nutraceutical Company
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- Therapies—Laser/Rehab
- Alternative Med—Acupuncture, Massage
- Anesthesia/Surgical
- Assistant
- ICU
- Inventory Manager
- Client Education – Zoos, Wildlife, Consultants to Public/ Industry, Pharmaceutical Reps, Instructors, Involved in Professional Associations
- Helping a clinic thrive, collaborating with an awesome team, making a difference in a patient's and owner's life 1 day at a time, 1 patient at a time

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client's name and the patients name and any pertinent history.

Observant and takes ownership: They are always seeking ways to improve processes, protocols, ways to manage better, decrease expenses and increase or grow a profit center. They will seek input from other team members or clients, and try to bring about solutions. They take pride and ownership of not only their individual contributions, but also the success and reputation of the practice they work in.

It is your choice—treat this as a job or strive to make a difference.

Make a list of the areas you enjoy most about working in a veterinary practice—managing inventory pharmaceuticals and what they are used for, surgery and anesthesia, ICU, lameness, diagnostics, clients, front office, etc…. and then assess what skills you possess to excel in one of these areas.

Assess the practice where you work. Are they treating you as a professional or a warm body? Can you change that perspective through your actions and intentions? You may have to have the difficult conversation with your supervisor or the owner of the practice. You have to be willing to take charge of your own destiny!

A great technician wants to continually expand their skill set and has certain areas of veterinary medicine they are passionate about. Your compassion and nursing skills can elevate the ICU to the preferred practice of choice for your referring DVM's and your clients. You have an intuitive sense of the status of the patient—something that often cannot be taught. The great technician will implement protocols such as communication, bio security, and state-of-the-art monitoring and nursing care to set your practice apart.

A great technician realizes that building a trusting relationship with the client is important. They understand how important customer service is. How client education, client communication, client surveys, patient updates, and providing estimates, authorizations, and discharge instructions are critical is follow up.

A great technician will take on the social media role of providing quality information to your clients through newsletters, emails, an informative website, Facebook and Twitter.

A great technician can brand their practice, set it apart and make a difference. They are often the ones tapped to become the practice managers. Encourage discussion and input—some amazing ideas and solutions are right at your fingertips.

Sometimes we get stuck—we tell ourselves this is all there is, this is all I can give, this is all that they recognize me for… this is all I am worth. And that is just self destructive talk. We all have the power to be great technicians.

Some of us might be afraid that if we stand up for ourselves, ask for what we are worth, be allowed to demonstrate what we can do, we might get shut down… and then we might not get to see our patients anymore, or lose what we have gained, or worse—lose our job. That is a burden that weighs us down every day—if we don't take pride in who we are, what we can offer and what we can be.

Don't ever settle for less than what you deserve… and we all deserve a room with no ceiling—the sky IS the limit. Bust out of that mold and you will be so glad you did. You will be so glad you said "Yes" to you!

Challenge yourself everyday and go for it. **MeV**

About the Author

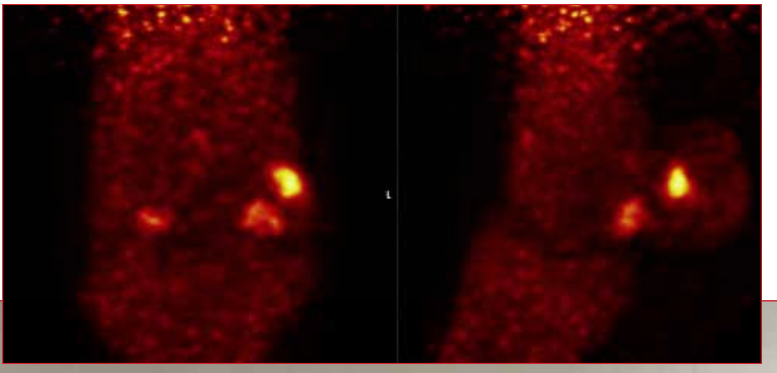
Deborah B. Reeder, BA, AS, RVT, VTS-EVN, is the executive director of American Association of Equine Veterinary Technicians and Associates.

Santa Anita Park Working to Reduce Breakdowns

Santa Anita Park Installed MILE-PET, the first positron emission tomography scanner designed to image standing racehorses. The installation was one of several measures to reduce breakdowns at the racetrack. The Stronach Group, owner of Santa Anita, invested in equine PET following the promising pilot work at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, where the team demonstrated that PET could detect abnormal changes in bones of racehorses, which were missed by other imaging modalities.

MILE-PET has established itself as a reliable and helpful diagnostic tool at the racetrack, helping owners, veterinarians and track officials make decisions about the animals' careers. In some cases, the PET findings helped to retire a horse, but in other cases, PET allowed veterinarians to monitor healing and identify the right time to resume training. PET is just one of several measures, such as prerace veterinary inspections and changes in medication rules, that were implemented to ensure a safer racing season at Santa Anita. Images: (From top) The 3D rendering of PET scan from the front (left) and side (right). The horse is being scanned for resolution of an injury. **MeV**

Adapted from a post on UC Davis. For more: ***www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/news/first-year-equine-pet-scans-santa-anita-success***



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