

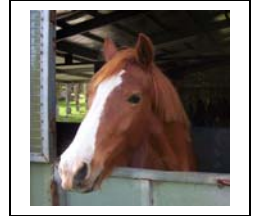
## OVER THE STABLE DOOR BY "HAMISH" From 2008 Cherry Chatters

**MARCH** Firstly a very Happy New Year to everyone, let's hope that this will be a better year for those of us equine inclined.

The latest update on EI (Equine Influenza) is that it is all but eradicated.

However should you want more information, there are several avenues to take

- don't just take someone else's word for it. Your equestrian club or
- association, HorseSA ( 0402 488 306), PIRSA hotline 1800 675 888, or the
- PIRSA website [www.pir.sa.gov.au](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au). So no excuses for not knowing!



Recently on several rideouts locally I have been so impressed by the politeness of passing motorists, who without exception have slowed down on approaching us horses. Not that we were doing anything fractious, just peacefully walking on the roadside. My rider always says a thank you to these thoughtful people. It is not only polite, but in the interests of safety for both parties. A 500kg equine through the windscreen of a car is potentially lethal. So riders, please do acknowledge these thoughtful motorists, many of whom are probably terrified of a horse on the ground, but still treat that animal and rider with respect –Thank you!

The other big concern this season of course is water, and hence feed. Already with the very dry spell we have been experiencing, paddocks are dry and in many cases bare. By having more than one yard or small paddock for your equine, you can rotate and rest your land. The benefits are very visible. To begin with, the ground cover will be improved, with the ideal being 75% or more, the appearance is improved, there is less chance of your equine ingesting sand, soil, grit etc and thus running the risk of colic and of course he will be happier if he has some small amount of something to nibble during the day. Remember, we are designed to eat little and often. Although we can be very adaptable, it is more natural and better for our gut to have something in it most of the time. If you have to totally hand feed, then at least 4 meals a day is preferable. Perhaps if that is not possible, you can arrange for a friendly neighbour or horse- mad (but sensible) school person to do that inbetween feed. Some equines spend the best part of their day waiting for their next meal and when it does come, will become very aggressive towards their owners, charging at them and baring their teeth etc. This is just not acceptable and can be very dangerous. Horses who do this need to be trained not only to face up, but respect their owner's space. Contact Hamish for advice if needed. Unfortunately we have probably another 4 months of dry weather, so hard times are ahead! However, time to get all those rugs in order before the chill hits us!

**APRIL** Maybe by the time this has gone to print we will have had some rain. The weather is always a good topic for those of us on acreages. It just affects everything we do and how we go about it.

For instance, this long dry spell has really affected our hooves. One of my paddock mates, who has normally quite hard and resilient hooves, has actually had to have them oiled this season. Hooves which up 'til this summer have quite a good consistency to them, have been dry around the edges and tending to break off. One of my other paddock mates has also had dry hooves, also very unusual for him. Our owner has been oiling them almost on a daily basis and this has been working to some extent.

Having said that, the goodness does have to come from within as well. And there those of us who have naturally drier hooves than others ( just like humans!). As always, it is knowing your equine and what is normal for him or her. There are some things that be done about hoof condition, i.e. the external application of a hoof dressing (and there are plenty on the market), making sure that you keep to a regular shoeing schedule and if your equine is not shod, then keep to a regular trimming routine as well. Just because your equine is without shoes and maybe spelled or just resting does not mean that the feet can be neglected (on the contrary). If the hooves are not trimmed and cared for on a regular basis (i.e. every 8 weeks), the toe of the hoof tends to grow overlong, putting extra strain on the tendons in the leg and perhaps causing permanent damage. The old horseman's adage 'no 'oof no 'orse' is so true. So please give your equine the respect he/she deserves and don't let out of sight be out of mind as well.

Remember this is also the time of year to be checking for rug repairs, or buying new ones ready for the wetter months. So get your mending out of the way while the rug menders are not at their busiest!

One other thought for these dry conditions. If you have to feed your equine out in the paddock, where there is little or no ground cover, then it can be useful to feed him on a large sheet of rubber matting. This can help to stop him from ingesting dirt, sand and muck and reduce the risk of colic.

That's all for this month, I trust that owners will also have been vigilant regarding their equine's eyes. Providing shelter/shade or a fly veil will help.

**MAY** Yes! We have had some rain and isn't it fabulous to see that green tinge coming through. Let us hope that the rain continues. There is nothing like a drought or other adverse weather conditions to push up the price of feed and other associated items.

This month I thought that I would cover running costs of horse ownership. If we look at the two main categories of expenses they are capital costs and running costs. Capital costs include things like the equine himself, your gear, car, float, stables, arena, clothes, rugs, grooming gear etc. Running costs include the following: Feed, supplements, farriery, agistment, veterinary (worming, vaccinations, wound treatments, dentistry, vet consultations, chiro), grooming (hoof dressings, shampoos, conditioners, fly sprays, clipping), stabling (hire, bedding, yard sand, bucket, bins, hay nets, lighting, manure disposal) arena upkeep (grading, surface replacement).

Other running costs may include things like transport costs (towing or hire), personal travelling or even professional transport. Competition costs if any would include membership costs, horse registration, facility hire, entry fees. Also include in your running costs lessons, magazines, courses, books and videos.

Doesn't it add up! I haven't itemised absolutely everything, but rather to give you an idea of generally what costs are involved. So any of you out there considering buying a horse, please take these items into consideration. Especially the veterinary aspect, as this can often be unexpected. Your equine is an investment, so please don't stint on the expense of his welfare and health.

My education continues.....I have now attended a 2 day clinic where I behaved very well, although I am having trouble with the right hand canter. Apart from that I am being a very good boy!

**JUNE** Although this topic has been covered before I thought a little revision wouldn't go amiss....

Many local horse owners ride the local trails, namely the Tom Roberts trail. Not all parts of this trail are the idyllic sheltered and safe trail that we would all prefer. Trail etiquette or trail safety (both for riders and other members of the public) is paramount. Safety for riders and their equines includes making sure that someone at home knows where you are heading off to, who with and when you propose to return. At least one person should be nominated as 'leader', even if there is only two of you. That person should carry a mobile phone in case of emergency, some money, a hoof pick, or anything else you think you may need along the way (munchies!). It may also be handy for your equine to wear a halter and lead rope if you intend to stop along the way and rest (or any other emergency). In a group, do stick together, riding in twos is safe enough if not too much traffic. Single file is preferable on narrow verges or if there is a lot of traffic. When crossing roads, don't leave one horse behind, as it may panic. That means that you need to be extra sure the road is clear before crossing. Always thank those motorists who are safety conscious enough to slow down for you. Timid horses or riders need to be kept in the middle of the group and preferably next to a quiet reliable horse. As a group, the speed of the ride must be geared toward the slowest or least capable combination. This is preferable to be known before the ride sets out so as not to upset those people wanting to go faster. Always let the rest of the riders know what is happening at the front, eg make sure that everyone wants to trot together and let everyone know when to slow down. Slower horses must be catered for. Do not leave them too far behind, as the horse can become fractious and difficult to handle. In the interests of all the riders' safety, anyone with an unreliable horse should not ride with the group. Don't put other people at risk just because you want to go for a ride! Get your horse's problems sorted out first and then gradually go out on rides with one quiet and reliable horse for company.

Council regulations recommend that walking and trotting are permitted on the Tom Roberts Trail – no cantering! Much of the trail is in 80kph zones with the majority of motorists unaware of the unpredictability of horses or how dangerous it can be if the two collide. Some extremely irresponsible riders have been seen not only cantering alongside the road, but also without helmets. These days there are so many types and brands of helmets on the market; there really is no excuse for venturing out on to a public road without one. Going without a helmet is not only foolhardy, but just shows ignorance and presents a poor image for horse riders.

If you need to float your horse to a central point to ride, be it locally, the forest or the beach; do go prepared with a pooper scooper or a broom or a bucket or whatever you use to pick up poo. If your horse manures at the float before you leave on your ride, pick it up before you leave, not after. Also if you see manure left by some other thoughtless person, pick that up too – be a responsible rider!

**JULY** Greetings fellow equines and horse owners!

I wish to apologise for not having an article this month as my owners have been busy planting trees & spraying weeds!

Til next month then.....Hamish

**AUGUST** In previous issues I have covered such essentials as rugging, feeding, etiquette etc. One other basic is grooming. There are many benefits of grooming for your equine. It is just as important, if not more so to groom your equine after being ridden as well as before.

Basic benefits include cleanliness, appearance, promoting a better circulation through massage. Spin off benefits include learning to 'park' or stand still, bonding with you, learning to notice anything not 'normal' on your horse's body, such as a sore, cuts, swellings, heat, loose shoes, runny nose, eye injuries and so on. Also a matted tail may indicate an upset tummy. Some of these things may need a follow up with your vet, others may not. The important thing is to be aware of any changes.

A basic grooming kit consists of a hoof pick, a dandy brush or plastic curry comb for removing any dried mud, sweat, a body brush for the softer parts of his body and tail. Sponges for cleaning eyes, muzzle and under the dock. One or two towels are also useful for rubbing down after riding. You may also like to include a mane comb, bot knife, hoof dressing and other sundry items which suit your particular regime. A bucket of water is also handy for the sponges, towels and cleaning your bit after riding. (Never put a dirty bit in your horse's mouth!)

Start your grooming session by first tethering your equine safely (Western or English). Always start with the feet, as this will tell you immediately whether your mount is going to be fit for riding! As you clean out the feet, check for loose shoes, heat, swelling, any tenderness and cuts. After the all-clear, move to the body, starting at the head and working towards the tail. Make sure that you do not use the dandy brush on his face, keep the body brush for that or even a smaller version of the same. If he is particularly touchy, you may need to use a towel. Pay special attention to the bridle and girth areas, as they are prone to sweat up after riding. Then when you think you have cleaned it really thoroughly, check with your fingers for any of those elusive lumps of dirt. Just behind his elbows can be trouble spot, especially when your horse gets a woolly winter coat. Next we move onto the mane and tail. Although it may seem tedious, getting the worst tangles out is better done by hand, as he will lose less hair that way. If the hair is badly matted, even then a five minute going over by hand will still mean less hair loss before you resort to washing. Once the mane has been brushed on the top, then lay it over to do the underneath. Then return to the original side. You may also like to trim a bridle path for the headpiece of the bridle. It may be safer to unfasten him to do this if he is liable to throw his head up as you trim. If his mane is really long at the wither end, you can trim there too, as these long hairs can get caught up under the saddle and pinch. Having checked the tail by hand, we can then brush it, always keeping to the side, never directly behind. Work from outside in, taking a few hairs at a time until you have done the whole tail. One thing here, is not to overdo the mane and tail brushing, as these are both important parts for your horse for protection and fly swatting. A trim with the scissors will make the tail look smart ( 15cm from the ground is plenty). Finally check to see that his eyes, nose and bottom are clean (use a different sponge or cloth for the front and back ends!).

Here in Australia, we tend to wash our horses more than our European counterparts, however, overdoing it removes too much of the natural oils from his fur. So please do not use this as a substitute for your regular grooming. Also a no no is hosing down on a cold day or a cold day with a chill factor, don't hose late in the day and also make sure that he is dried as quickly as possible. Leading him around with a light sheet on will help. If he has white socks, then brush them as clean as you can and avoid washing those areas below the fetlock if possible. In the hills, white legs and white feet can be prone to greasy heel, which will put your beloved equine out of action for some time.

Finally, a periodic clean of your brushes and combs is a good idea. Stand the brushes with the bristles down, so that they drain well and the wooden backs don't suffer. Like everything with our equines, maintenance is ongoing, so get into the habit and it becomes easier. And of course the one who benefits most is our beloved equine!

**SEPTEMBER** Last month I signed off with a reminder about founder being an issue in the coming months. It really goes from July and into spring. Although ponies are particularly at risk, larger equines are not immune! Once they have contracted founder, they are often more likely to suffer from it again. Do be aware of any changes in your equine's feet, especially temperature.

Other signs will be a cresty neck that is quite solid to feel. He may also stand in his yard / paddock with his front feet outstretched. (this takes the weight off the toes). It is a very painful condition and can be fatal, so do be vigilant. If you see any of these signs, the pony must be immediately removed from that lovely lush pasture. Good quality meadow hay is the safest feed in this situation. Light exercise can also be beneficial depending on circumstances. If you do want to graze him, then night time is safer, when there are less sugars in the grass. The bottom line is though, if you have any concerns at all re management of this condition, then talk to your vet.

While on the subject of feet, my owners have decided after discussion with my farrier, not to have me shod. At present, my feet are in very good condition and have a good shape to them. Unfortunately to be able to be ridden out on the road, though, I was going to need some extra protection. My owners did some research on the net and spoke to friends to look at various ways of protecting my feet. At the moment there are several brands of synthetic boots on the market and over the years, these products have improved in leaps and bounds. Brand names such as Ezi Boot, Big Mac's, Boa and Cavallo come to mind. They all vary in their attachments and you do need to shop around to see what suits you. Some are easier to put on and off than others (particularly for women). They do wear very well and my owners calculated that my boots will have paid for themselves after 8 months or 5 shoeings (that was for a set of 4). That includes the cost of having the hooves trimmed as usual. I will only be wearing my boots on an average of twice a week, but it is a great saving on the wear and tear of my feet. The different brands come in all sorts of sizes and you need to carefully measure the feet to ensure the correct fitting. At the present rate of use, my shoes should last at least 12 months, possibly 24. I will keep you posted as to their endurance!

I was a bit of a circus when fitted for mine the first time and became very 'steppy' (quite showy actually!). After a couple of test runs I became used to them and I can trot and canter along without any hassles. If I am not ridden out on the road, then I still go barefoot, which helps to maintain the hardness of my hooves. If you are interested in barefoot shoeing, but your horse has weak feet, then this can be a viable option for you. Continual shoeing does weaken the hoof and while most equines can cope reasonably well with this, some struggle. It really is an individual thing, which works better for some than others.

That's all for this month (hasn't the rain been great!).

**OCTOBER** Well, in the last month my owners have discovered that there is always something to learn, no matter how much you think you know. In recent years they have been using the increasingly popular synthetic rugs. They look very attractive, come in a trendy variety of colours and have more fittings than you can poke a stick at! There are many positives to these rugs. The fittings are great, they are warm, light and easy to handle. With care they will last around 3 winters, depending on how rough your equine is on them. Compared with the traditional canvas, which will last longer. What my owners have found, though, is that the more modern canvas often has a polyester/cotton component, which seems to lessen their waterproof life. Both types of rug can be waterproofed when they start to leak.

I have a new synthetic rug, as does one of my paddock mates. One morning my mate's rug had a belly strap ripped off. No harm done and my owners duly got the rug repaired, putting the rug back on in the same way as before. The next morning, there my mate was, standing in his stable yard with his near hind leg hooked up in the belly strap. Fortunately he is not one to panic and had not been like that for very long and my owners undid the rug safely. They could tell it was for a short time as the ground was undisturbed and there was no manure lying close by. So, two things became obvious here – the first one being that this was probably the cause of why the belly strap was ripped off in the first place and the second being that the belly straps needed to be connected a bit more snugly ( ie. Shortened). So if you have rugs with belly straps on them, it might pay to check on the snugness of fit. A more panicky equine could have done themselves a lot more damage, even to the extent of breaking a leg. My owners try to do their best for me and my paddock mates, but even they can make mistakes. Luckily there was no harm done and a lesson was learned.

Finally a thought on weeds. They will be coming up rapidly in your paddocks now. So get out there and if you can spray, and if you can't spray, then pull. If you need advice on weeds, HorseSA is running a free field day at the equestrian centre, Lobethal on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 9am – 11.30am. Those who attend will receive a free copy of HorsesLandWater Action planner and Management Guideline, there will also be free soil testing kits available and information from the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM board. If you need some weeds or plants identified, bring them along, complete with bulb, root and seed head if possible. Ring or email HorseSA on 82942460, [horsesa@horsesa.asn.au](mailto:horsesa@horsesa.asn.au). Or you can book online via

[www.horseslandwater.com](http://www.horseslandwater.com). It's not often you get things for free these days, so take advantage of this great opportunity!

**NOVEMBER** The ongoing saga of my education.....although this applies to other equines as well.

Since my last article, I have been to Pony Club camp, along with another 60 odd horses. I was in a small paddock with a paddock mate for company.

We arrived around lunchtime on the first day, so I had the rest of the day and evening to settle in. The following day I was very naughty and difficult to saddle up, so I was returned to my paddock. Later I was taken out again for saddling. Having a second look around calmed me down a lot and I saddled up well. I was trying to tell my owners that I just needed that little bit of extra time to adjust and I would be OK. Sometimes humans expect us to be on the same wavelength, when obviously we have other thoughts (like food!).

Always be aware of your equine's body language, especially in new surroundings. Things like short choppy steps (lack of rhythm), being heavy in hand, inattention, looking around, chomping on the bit, tail swishing, lack of 'park' etc. These things are all saying that we need more time to settle and adjust to the new situation. Often taking us away from the new situation (even being tied up to the float again) and then returning to the new situation some time later will make us feel more relaxed. This may have to be done 2 or 3 times. This happened to me for the whole week I was at camp and I gradually became more relaxed as time went on. I finished on a good note and my owners were happy with me.

Summer thoughts – flies will be in their numbers soon, so why not invest in one of those flycatcher jars. They cost around \$40 and are reuseable. Flyveils and nose guards may be needed on those equines who are susceptible to the sun. Make sure your equine has adequate shelter and plenty of clean fresh water. Keep grass down around sheds and shelters to discourage snakes.

**DECEMBER** I hope that everyone got their hay cut and shedded this year. It has been an early season and as always growers are at the mercy of the elements.

It is a good idea to have a worming program in place with your horse. Your vet can do a tube drench, which is usually a very thorough way of getting rid of worms, or you can use one of the worming pastes on the market. If you are not sure which brand to use, check with your vet, as different pastes attack different types of worms. Some people prefer to go the 'natural' way and not use any chemical substances. Garlic is one alternative ingredient that can be used. Most commercial products recommend a six weekly usage. (This helps to break the worm cycle). If you are not sure whether your equine needs worming, you can always get a worm count done. Take a small sample of poo, put in a plastic bag, label with horse's name and date taken and take to your vet. Depending on the result, your vet will be able to advise where to go from there. Things which can aid in keeping your equines worm free are cross grazing (sheep and cows), rotating your paddocks, so that they get a rest, picking up manure and of course keeping to a regular worming schedule. New horses should be kept separate for at least four days before putting them in with your regular stock. Signs of worminess can be a rough and 'starry' coat (usually with no sheen), a pot belly, rubbing of the tail, lethargy, inability to keep condition, runny manure. Worms can do enormous damage to a horse's gut, so it is best to keep on top of this. Severe gut damage can lead to a predisposition to colic, so with your equine's welfare at heart, make sure that he/she is as worm free as possible.

My education is continuing on a regular basis, so all is well on that front. I am 5 years old now, and am developing what is called a work ethic!

Have a safe and hay filled Christmas everyone - see you in the New Year!

Hamish