

Equine Veterinary Services

Information for Horse Owners



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
The Royal (Dick) School
of Veterinary Studies

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Welcome to the Dick Vet Equine Hospital. Your horse has been referred to one of the leading Specialist Veterinary Centres in the UK where our highly trained caring staff and excellent facilities will make sure your horse receives the best care possible during their stay in our hospital.

We know from talking with many of our clients that there are often questions which you would like to ask. In this leaflet we have outlined some of the most frequently asked questions.

Our goals are to provide a professional, caring and efficient service to all clients, whose animals' wellbeing is our primary concern, to provide clinical training for veterinary students and clinical scholars and to further the education of veterinary surgeons.

If my horse has to stay overnight in the hospital, do I need to bring food, rugs etc?

No, your horse will be fed a balanced diet using our own food supplies under the supervision of our Head Groom. Please feel free to discuss any special requirements with us. We have a selection of rugs, but if you would like to leave a rug for your horse that is fine. However, we do encourage you not to leave head collars with us.

Should I bring my horse's passport?

Yes. It is a legal requirement that your horse travels with his/her passport. If your horse stays in the hospital, then the passport should be handed in to reception where it will be safely stored. Please note that, prior to visiting the Dick Vet Equine Hospital, you must declare in the passport whether or not your horse is intended for human consumption. If you do not intend this outcome, then the relevant section in your passport should be signed. Whether or not you sign this declaration may have implications for the range of drugs that we can use in your horse. For example phenylbutazone ('bute') needs to be recorded in the passport every time it is used, while a very useful antibiotic called metronidazole cannot be used in horses intended for human consumption.

How long will my horse's examination take?

In most cases it is not possible to give an accurate time requirement prior to the examination. Sometimes the cause of the problem is fairly obvious and you may be heading home after a couple of hours. In many other cases the examination may take several days. For example, during lameness examinations, we have to wait for some nerve blocks to wear off before we can continue the examination, and this may take half a day. Similarly, performing a liver biopsy is an invasive procedure and it may be safer for us to monitor your horse after the procedure. If extensive tests such as radiographic investigations, scintigraphy, CT or MRI are required, the horse will often need to stay for several days. Most clients find it convenient to stable their horse with us for one or two days if the examination lasts more than a few hours.

Should I have my horse's shoes removed before I bring him/her for a lameness examination?

No. If your horse is normally shod then that is how we need to examine him/her. Many horses will rapidly become lame if trotted unshod on a hard surface, which will complicate our examination. For radiography of the feet we need to remove the shoes, and a small fee is charged for this.

My horse is on 'Bute' (Phenylbutazone). Should I stop giving him this before I bring him/her to the hospital?

You should check with your own vet, but unless your horse is very sore, we need to see him/her without the possible masking effects of painkillers.

Do I need to bring my horse's tack?

Orthopaedic cases sometimes need to be ridden, especially if the complaint is only apparent under saddle, so please bring your usual saddle and bridle in case. If your horse is having a heart examination, a ridden examination may be required so please bring your tack and any boots your horse normally wears when worked. Let us know if you are unable to ride your horse yourself, so that we can ensure a suitable jockey is available.

When may I drop off/pick up my horse?

Normally this should be during working hours (Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm) by prior arrangement with one of our veterinarians. If this is not possible, then alternative arrangements can be made in consultation with the veterinarian on emergency out-of-hours duty.

What resources are there in the hospital to care for my horse?

We have a large team of veterinary surgeons, most with specialist-qualifications and a great deal of experience in specialist areas. Working alongside the surgeons are highly skilled veterinary anaesthetists. In addition, we have qualified equine veterinary nurses, veterinary students and experienced grooms involved in the daily management of our patients.

“One cannot fail to be impressed by the facilities and skills available at the centre. The training of students and the continuous development of equipment, techniques and the site, to ensure that outcomes for animal care are of the highest standard, are a revelation.”





“Once again a big thank you to one
and all for your professionalism,
kindness and care.”



All horses are checked regularly whilst in the hospital, even throughout the night, to ensure that their clinical condition is monitored. The frequency and nature of checks will depend on the condition, with some horses, and particularly foals, often requiring intensive care. We obviously balance this requirement with the wish to allow horses sufficient time to rest.

Will students be involved with the care and treatment of my horse?

As the Equine Hospital is a teaching hospital, training the next generation of veterinary surgeons, the answer to this question is definitely “yes”. The veterinary students, in addition to learning how to be good veterinarians, play a vital role in the daily routine care of your horse. They are always working under the direct or indirect supervision of experienced staff.

Will my horse need to be clipped?

Yes, it may be necessary to clip your horse for certain procedures such as surgical operations, ultrasound examinations, nerve or joint blocks or intravenous catheterisation. If your horse needs surgery and has a general anaesthetic, then the veterinary anaesthetist looking after your animal may find it necessary to clip some areas where monitoring equipment is attached. Bearing in mind your horse's appearance, we will ensure that the areas clipped are as small as possible. However, it is important for you to appreciate that these steps are taken with the goal of making the procedures, anaesthetic and surgery as safe as possible for your horse.

What will happen if my horse requires an anaesthetic?

All anaesthetics and sedatives are administered under the guidance of veterinary surgeons. For all general anaesthetics, the procedure will be performed under the guidance of our specially-trained anaesthesia team; we are one of only two centres in the north of the UK that have fully qualified specialist anaesthetists.

While equine anaesthesia is not without risks, all horses are connected to monitoring equipment similar to that found in human hospitals, and the anaesthetists take every possible precaution to minimise any risks involved. This means that the anaesthetic mortality rate in the Equine Hospital is considerably lower than the UK average, considering the types of cases we see. The anaesthesia team also ensures that your horse receives appropriate pain control.

How shall I get information about my horse when he/she is in the hospital?

One of our team of vets will telephone you regularly with a progress report. You may telephone the hospital, but please be aware that our vets are very busy dealing with patients and cannot always immediately come to the telephone, so they may have to call you back later. It is important that you leave daytime and after hours contact numbers.

May I visit my horse?

Clients wishing to visit their horses should contact the clinician involved in their case prior to visiting the hospital. You will then be given an appointment time to visit between 9.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday or between 10am and 11am in the morning and 3pm and 4pm in the afternoon at the weekend, again by appointment only. We ask that clients respect our visiting hours, which enables us to maximise the time available for treating your horse, allowing clinicians to concentrate on the procedures and checks necessary to optimise your horse's care. Sick and injured horses need time for rest and for reasons of safety and patient confidentiality, we cannot allow unsupervised visits. However, we always try to get your horse home to you as soon as possible

Will my horse get exercised whilst in the hospital?

Most horses are walked out twice daily whilst in the hospital, as long as this does not interfere with any diagnostic procedures or treatments. For example, some lame horses may be on strict box rest. Please warn us if your horse is difficult 'in-hand' as this allows us to take extra care and use a bridle when walking out.

Will my horse have access to pasture during his/her stay in the hospital?

Unfortunately we do not have sufficient pasture to allow hospitalised horses out to grass paddocks. We do, however, try to ensure that horses are walked out and grazed twice daily. Additionally, we have some grazing available for mares with foals, recovering chronic grass sickness cases and other selected cases.

Will my horse be involved in clinical investigations?

The hospital staff are specialists in their field and are often involved in clinical surveys and investigations which are aimed at developing better tests and treatments, which could directly benefit your horse and other horses in the future. If a study is underway involving the same problem as that suffered by your horse, you may be asked if you wish to participate. The study will always be discussed with you fully and your written permission will be obtained before proceeding. If you do not wish your horse to be involved, you are under no obligation to participate.

What happens when my horse is discharged from the hospital?

When discharged, you will normally receive some instructions on how to care for your horse at home. A copy of this form will also be immediately faxed to your own vet. A clinical report detailing all the findings from the case will be sent to you and your vet within the next couple of days. If you wish, you can pay your bill at the time of collection. Otherwise a bill will be sent soon after discharge. Please feel free to ask us for assistance with insurance claims (please refer to our terms and conditions).

“We will never be able to express enough gratitude for the expertise and dedication of the Dick Vet team.”



Dick Vet Equine Practice

The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies
The University of Edinburgh
Easter Bush Campus
Midlothian EH25 9RG

telephone 0131 650 6253
fax 0131 650 8824
email EQH@ed.ac.uk
www.DickVetEquine.com



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