December 2008/ January 2009

Southern Horse Festival

The Southern Horse Festival is fast approaching and sponsors are still needed. The Annual Southern Horse Festival will be held December 13-14th at the Bob Martin Eastern Agricultural Center in Williamston, NC. The NC Horse Council is conducting the festival as a benefit horse show with the proceeds going to educational grants and scholarships. This is the perfect opportunity for equestrians of all kinds to come show off their horses and by doing so benefit our young riders throughout the state. For a class sheet and entry information, visit www.nchorsecouncil.com.

Southeastern NC Hay Directory

Looking for hay? The Southeastern NC Hay Directory has a listing of numerous hay sources throughout the area. You can find the hay directory online by visiting the Onslow County Extension website – http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu – and then clicking on Animal Agriculture in the menu on the left. The link to the hay directory as well as information about selecting hay can be found there. For a print copy of the Hay Directory, call or visit us at the Extension office.

Choke: What To Do?

Seeing a choking horse for the first time can be a scary experience but choke can be a common problem. Hopefully it will never be a situation you encounter, but if you do, here is some information about the condition to help you be prepared to respond.

A horse that begins to choke may start stretching its head and neck out while gagging. Others may have saliva and undigested food coming out of their nose or mouth. If you think that your horse is choking, remove all feed and water and call your vet.

A horse with choke should be treated as a medical emergency. Humans choke when our trachea or windpipe becomes clogged. Horses, on the other hand, choke when the esophagus becomes clogged, so they are still able to breathe while the situation is occurring. If the condition is caught early, most horses are treated with no problems. If the condition continues without treatment, the horse can suffer from tears or ruptures in the esophagus. In a worst case scenario, food particles can be inhaled into the lungs.
during the episode and cause pneumonia. Horses who suffer from choke for several days or choke repeatedly may end up with ulcers or scar tissue in the esophagus. This can make them even more prone to choking again in the future.

Choke is often times treated by having the vet sedate the horse to relax it so that the obstruction can pass through. They may also pass a stomach tube to find the obstruction so that it can be encouraged to break up and pass through on its own.

Older horses are more prone to choke than younger horses simply because they often aren’t able to chew their food as well. Proper dental care can help ensure that older horses are less likely to suffer from this condition. Horses that bolt their food, meaning they eat too quickly, are also susceptible. In these cases, large rocks can be added to the feed bucket to help slow them down or you may need to change your feeding routine.

Routine dental care for horses of any age can help reduce the risk that your horse will suffer from this condition.

**Managing The Horse That Has “Heaves”**

Feeding a horse that has heaves can be a tricky situation. The formal name for heaves is recurrent airway obstruction (RAO) or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Horses with this condition may suffer from wheezing, coughing, or difficulty breathing and are highly sensitive to allergens from hay and bedding. They may also suffer from seasonal allergies related to pollens. This sensitivity can make it difficult to manage their feeding without aggravating their condition.

When feeding hay to horses with this condition, wetting the hay is recommended to help reduce dusts. Often, horse owners will soak the hay before feeding, but simply dunking the hay in water to thoroughly wet it will reduce the dusts significantly. Soaking hay leaches valuable nutrients, so unless the horse needs to have the hay soaked also (i.e., horses with chronic laminitis), then it’s best to avoid doing so.

Be aware of the potential dust from certain grains, such as rolled oats, as they may also cause problems for the horse also. It may be a good idea to wet these feeds to reduce dust.

In addition, be aware of barn conditions if the horse is stalled for periods of time. Routine stall cleaning within the barn may stir up enough dust to aggravate the horse’s respiratory tract. It may be best to remove the horse from the barn while this is taking place. Grooming in a confined area with poor air circulation may also stir up enough dust to make breathing difficult for a very sensitive horse. Even small changes may make a big difference in terms of keeping this condition in check.

**Calendar of Events**

**December**
- 11th – Scott Spencer Horsemanship and Trimming demo – Morehead City
- 12th – 14th - Southern Horse Festival – Williamston
- 13th – EDCTSA dressage show – Clay Hill Stables

**January**
- 10th -11th – NCSU Advanced Judging Shortcourse – Raleigh
- 17th -18th – NC Horse Management and REINS Conference – Location TBA

Emily Adams Walton
Extension Agent, Livestock
Holiday Safety Tips

The holidays are an exciting time of year for everyone, here are some tips to help ensure a safe holiday season.

**Trees**

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant."
- When purchasing a live tree always check for freshness. A fresh tree is less of a fire hazard. Fresh trees are green, with needles that are hard to pull from branches and do not break easily. The trunk should be sticky with resin.
- When setting up a tree at home, cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption. Be sure to keep the stand filled with water, heated rooms can dry live trees out rapidly.
- Place trees away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters, out of walkways, and don't allow it to block doorways.

**Lights**

- Make sure all lights you use outdoors have been certified for outdoor use. Plug all outdoor electric decorations into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters.
- Check all tree lights—even if they are new—to make sure all the bulbs are working and that there are no frayed wires or loose connections.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house.

**Decorations**

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonlead metals.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens. Use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they won’t fall down.
- In homes with small children, take care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.
- Remove wrapping paper, bags, ribbons and bows from tree and fireplace areas after gifts are opened. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards to a small child, or can cause a fire if near flame.

**Toy Safety**

- Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the receiver. Toys that are too advanced may pose safety hazards.
- To prevent burns and electrical shocks don't give children, under age ten, a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet.
- Strings and ribbons that are more than 12 inches in length could be a strangulation hazard. Remove them from toys before giving them to young children.

**Visiting**

- When traveling in the car make sure everyone is buckled up, and stays that way.
- Remember that homes you visit may not be childproofed. Watch for danger spots.
- Traveling, visiting, getting presents, shopping, etc., can all increase a child's stress levels. Stick to children's usual eating and sleeping schedules as much as possible to help you and them
enjoy the holidays and reduce stress.

**Fireplaces**

♦ Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Make sure that flue is open.
♦ Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace they ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

**Pets**

♦ People food is not good for pets it can cause gastrointestinal upset. Do not give poultry bones to your pets, they can splinter and cause severe injury. Onions can be toxic to both dogs and cats. Chocolate can cause a fatal heart attack if ingested in large doses.
♦ During the holidays, pets may not understand why their usually quiet home is full of people and noise. Provide pets with a quiet place to retreat to help them be more at ease. Also, keep an eye on pets when doors are opening and closing frequently, upset pets may slip out in the commotion.

♦ Decorations usually mean extra cords and plugs -- tempting "chew toys" for pets. Take an extra minute or two during decorating to tape down or cover cords.
♦ Anchoring the top of the tree to the ceiling with a strong cord will help keep it in place around frolicking pets. Some pets are inclined to eat tinsel hanging from trees -- this can cause an intestinal obstruction – avoid tinsel or keep tinsel decorations high on the tree.
♦ Mistletoe and holly berries, as well as poinsettia plants can be poisonous to pets. Pine needles can puncture holes in a pet’s intestine causing an emergency visit to the vet. Use repellent sprays to keep pets away from areas and objects that may cause them harm.

*Have a safe and happy Holiday!*