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THE USE OF COLA FOR THE TREATMENT OF GASTRIC IMPACTIONS IN HORSES

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Background: Gastric impactions are an uncommon cause of colic in horses (Freeman 2011), although they appear to occur more often in Friesians. The administration of cola via nasogastric tube to (help) resolve impactions has been described (Banse *et al.* 2011; Rodriguez Hurtado *et al.* 2007), but the efficacy of this treatment has not been reported.

Objectives: To compare the success of treatment of gastric impactions with and without the use of cola and to determine whether Friesians are more often affected by gastric impactions than other breeds.

Methods: Patient records were retrieved (2003–2019) and 125 horses with gastric impactions identified. The outcome was compared between horses that were treated with cola and those that were not. The percentage of Friesians in the group of horses with gastric impactions was compared to that in the population admitted to our clinic and treatment success in Friesians was compared to that in other breeds.

Results: Overall 72/125 (57.6%) horses with gastric impactions were discharged from the hospital, but the likelihood of survival was significantly greater in horses treated with cola (48/58 = 82.8% vs. 24/67 = 35.8%, $p < 0.001$). Of the 125 horses with gastric impactions 38 (30.4%) were Friesians, a significantly higher percentage than in our hospital population (9.4%, $p < 0.001$). Also, Friesians treated with cola were less likely to survive (12/18 = 66.7%) than other breeds (36/40 = 90%, $p = 0.03$).

Conclusions: Gastric impactions in horses are more likely to be resolved when treatment includes the nasogastric administration of cola. Friesian horses are more likely to develop gastric impactions than other breeds and less likely to survive.

Ethical animal research: No ethical approval required.

Source of funding: None.

Competing interests: None.

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Post-operative management and complications

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TICK-BORNE DISEASES AS A CAUSE OF POST-OPERATIVE FEVER AFTER COLIC SURGERY IN NORTHERN ITALY

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Background: Fever can be a common complication after colic surgery and definition of its cause is paramount to avoid antibiotics overuse. Tick-borne diseases are endemic in northern Italy and a common cause of pyrexia and hyperbilirubinaemia.

Objectives: To evaluate the incidence of post-operative fever caused by piroplasmids in horses recovered from colic surgery.

Methods: Records of horses that recovered from anaesthesia after emergency laparotomy between January 2018 and March 2021 were considered. Blood samples were collected in the first postoperative day and tested by PCR for *Babesia spp.*, *Theileria spp.* and *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*. Clinical and haematological signs of anaemia, fever and icterus were recorded, as well as post-operative antimicrobials administration.

Results: 139 horses met the criteria for the study. Overall 82/139 horses developed post-operative fever (59%). The majority (38/82, 46%) developed pyrexia at a median of 4 days (3–5) post-operatively, while 35/82 (43%) tested positive by *Babesia/Theileria* PCR and had other symptoms, in addition to fever, associated with piroplasmids. Sequencing of PCR positive samples revealed the presence of *T. equi*, *B. capreoli*, *B. motasi*, and *A. phagocytophilum*. In 8/32 (25%) cases, an incisional discharge was present. Horses were treated with a 5–7 day course of EV oxytetracycline. Resolution of symptoms occurred in 30/35 cases. In the remaining 5 cases (1 positive to *A. phagocytophilum*, 3 to *Babesia*, 1 to *T. equi*), administration of imidocarb was necessary.

Conclusions: Delayed onset of postoperative pyrexia may be due to piroplasmids infection in endemic areas. Oxytetracycline administration is effective in resolving the symptoms in the majority of cases.

Ethical animal research: Written informed consent was obtained from all horses' owners.

Source of funding: None.

Competing interests: None.