

British Horse Society and Dodson & Horrell hold second laminitis conference.

The Society and Dodson & Horrell (D&H) held a second laminitis awareness conference at Moulton College, Northampton following their 'sell out' first conference in March.

Delegates heard of the ongoing concerns of obese horses and horses suffering with laminitis from world renowned speakers Professor Derek Knottenbelt OBE and Dr Catherine McGowan from the University of Liverpool, Dr John Keen from The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies and Dr Teresa Hollands from D&H. The main message of the morning was the danger of allowing horses to become overweight and associated problems including Equine Metabolic Syndrome.

Lee Hackett Senior Executive BHS welfare said "We hear of many cases of horse owners at livery yards who feel pressurised to rug up and provide extra feed to their horses when the horse really has no need for either. The result is overweight horses being kept overweight during the winter and exposed as fat horses to the spring grass. Naturally, horses were designed to lose weight during the winter and re-gain the weight lost during the spring. Of course, horse owners want to keep their horses in good condition, no one wants to end up with a very thin horse, but it is important to remember that a fat horse is also a concern."

Dr Hollands said "Recent research carried out at the AHT suggests that the incidence of laminitis is just 1%, but when 100% of the audience has been involved with a horse with laminitis, then it really suggests that the whole problem is underreported. Helping owners and trainers recognise the very early signs of metabolic laminitis and keeping them up to date with the latest information on laminitis was the main aim of the awareness campaign. We want to help owners keep their horses healthy and fit throughout their life; nutritional support plays a crucial role and this campaign is just part of our commitment to keeping horses healthy and performing for life.

The afternoon provided an insightful presentation on the horse's laminae by Professor Knottenbelt. Delegates were then split into five groups and rotated around the five practical demonstrations. Moulton College very kindly provided a wide range of horses for the demonstrations and the equine therapy centre enabled delegates to see first hand the facilities on offer and their relevance to horse fitness and rehabilitation. Delegates saw ultrasound being used to look under the skin of horses to assess the internal fat in horses and a hands-on session to fat score horses.

There were further practical sessions on recognising the signs of laminitis before the horse displays the typical laminitic stance. The small signs, often missed by horse owners or misdiagnosed can often be the start of laminitis.

Emmeline Hannelly, BHS Welfare Executive, said "This conference was an excellent day. Delegates were able to hear from and discuss with our

speakers the latest thoughts on the causes and prevention of laminitis. It is rare to assemble and be able to hear from so many experts in this field at one conference."

Mark Weston, BHS Director of Access, Safety and Welfare said 'The BHS is very grateful to our partners Dodson & Horrell, The University of Liverpool Vet School, The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies and Moulton College without whom this second conference would not have been possible and to all of our speakers who kept delegates enthralled all day.'