

VETERINARY IRELAND MEDIA RELEASE

Vets Urge Horse Owners To Be Vigilant As Incidence of Harmful Condition Increases

Horse owners are being warned about an increase in incidents of a harmful and potentially fatal condition for horses caused by ingestion of Sycamore tree seeds.

The Equine Interest Group in Veterinary Ireland has highlighted a recent increase in the incidence of **Equine Atypical Myopathy** also known as **Atypical Myoglobinuria** which can particularly affect Autumn and /or Spring grazing horses.

The representative organisation for vets in Ireland is asking horse owners to be vigilant about grazing environments and any possible emerging symptoms.

Speaking on the condition, Don Collins, Chair of the Equine Interest Group stated that “*horses have been known to die within 48-72 hours of the onset of symptoms, but survival rates can be improved by prompt treatment. Symptoms include sudden onset stiffness or muscle tremors and muscle weakness - showing as a reluctance to move and escalating to a point where the horse can no longer stand. Symptoms can also include dark coloured urine, dyspnoea and dysphagia*”.

Owners are being urged to be particularly vigilant where horses are grazing in pastures in close proximity to seed-laden Sycamore trees and to consult with their vet swiftly if they notice the potential onset of possible symptoms.

“The cause of death is a very specific metabolic block in the muscle's ability to burn fat for fuel, triggered by ingestion of an amino acid found in seeds of Sycamore trees in Europe; or the Ackee/Box Elder trees in the USA”, said Mr Collins. *“Owners can minimise the exposure of their animals to this disease by providing plenty of good quality forage and feed if needed. Owners may also fence off parts of fields exposed to sycamore seeds, or alternatively move their animals to fresh pastures”,* he concluded.

The Equine Group of Veterinary Ireland will host the Irish Equine Veterinary Conference in Lyrath Hotel, Kilkenny from 6th-8th November 2014. The main conference runs on Friday 7th & Saturday 8th November. It is preceded by a 'wetlab' on the afternoon of Thursday 6th November.

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