



Animal Health Trust

media *release*

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Vets needed for Eosinophilic Keratitis research

Researchers at the Animal Health Trust (AHT) are appealing for information from vets who have seen recent Eosinophilic Keratitis (EK) conditions, an emerging issue in UK equine ophthalmology.

Despite the increased awareness of EK worldwide, the aetiopathogenesis of the disease remains poorly understood and probably underdiagnosed. The AHT is looking to define the pathogenesis and determine why some horses are particularly susceptible to this condition, in particular looking for epidemiological links, environmental factors and parasitic infestation.

Many of the clinical signs of EK are non-specific and similar to other corneal conditions such as blepharospasm, chemosis, conjunctival hyperaemia, epiphora or perilesional oedema. More specific signs include caseous mucoid discharge and white/yellow plaques often localised in the peripheral cornea. The degree of pain varies and concurrent ulceration is almost always present. Conjunctivitis may also occur in association with the keratitis or as a unique disease entity.

EK can have variable clinical presentations, from a thick caseous accumulation to a more superficial plaque of "ground-glass" appearance. They may present as chronic non-healing ulcers that respond quickly to the use of topical steroids and/or ciclosporin, or present with marked ocular discomfort and require superficial keratectomy to resolve the condition.

Two different corneal locations are classically (though not exclusively) involved in EK, the medial perilimbal cornea, often under the third eyelid, or the lateral perilimbal cornea, which may progress axially towards the central cornea.

The charity is also helping to improve and assist with EK diagnosis by providing free cytology tests for corneal scrapes to try and diagnose the condition earlier and therefore avoid secondary complications that could lead to permanent visionary impairment.

If you have seen cases that have either been diagnosed as or that you suspect to be Eosinophilic Keratitis this year, contact Sonia Gonzalez-Medina on 01638 751000 Ext: 1203 or sonia.gonzalez-medina@aht.org.uk.

For more information and to download a copy of the submission form to accompany samples, please visit www.aht.org.uk/EKstudy.

For further information, please contact:

Sarah Shephard, AHT press office, 01638 751000 Ext: 1572

Additional notes:

The Animal Health Trust (AHT) is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. For more information, visit www.aht.org.uk