**CORONAVIRUS ROUTINE FARRIERY ADVICE**

Our current advice is that regular farriery appointments should be maintained whenever safe and possible to do so. This is important for the immediate welfare and the long term welfare of the equine.

You should discuss with your own farrier, who knows your equines and their feet the best what is the best course of action for each equine.

Equines with good feet

The simple straight forward minimal maintenance unshod bare foot equine with good feet can and will be able to miss a farriery cycle or 2 which will reduce the need for extra human contact.

Equines with poor feet

The more complicated sort with poor feet or laminitis tendencies should remain on their regular farrier cycle. The reason for which is that maintenance is key in preventing further problems such as laminitic flair ups or cracked damaged hooves which would result in potential lameness or abscesses which would then result in multiple persons needing to attend said equine to administer first aid and ongoing treatment, thus putting multiple people such as vets, farriers and equine carers at risk of potential cross contamination.

Shod equines

The shod equine falls into the same realms as above. The overdue shod equine and equines with certain foot problems must remain on their regular shoeing cycle to reduce the possibility of creating complications such as lameness, unbalanced feet or missing shoes which would inevitably require more human contact to treat or care for the equine due to the knock on effect of simply being overdue. A shod equine even at rest will still grow natural foot, its this growth that can put excess pressure upon the internal structures causing lameness and also as the feet grow they naturally increase in size which would mean they out grow the shoe which will lead to discomfort and lameness resulting in welfare issues and increased human attendance to care and treat the equine accordingly.

Removal of shoes

Removing the shoes from the shod equines is a possibility for some but I suggest to proceed with caution at this stage and treat each equine individually. With this very wet and prolonged winter, equines feet are suffering, and as a result, the feet are a lot softer than normal and in some cases hyper sensitive due to lack of integral structural horn resulting in inflammation. So by simply removing the shoes to decrease maintenance and the need for extra human contact may actually, in some cases result in the opposite, lame equines with bruised feet requiring extra human contact to administer first aid and ongoing treatment. You should consult your farrier to decide if any of your equines would be suitable for shoe removal.

Precautions to limit spread of the virus

Some of the traditional protective clothing may seem like a good idea but may not be practical for your farrier. For example, protective disposable gloves do not last a mere second when up against a farriers rasp nor is a disposable bio hazard suit safe to wear near open flames or a hot shoe!

Where possible equines to be seen by the farrier should be tied up ready and waiting and any handlers must be fit and healthy and keep the appropriate distance. Where possible the equine should wear ‘clean’ kit which has not been handles by multiple other people to limit the chances of cross contamination. Your farrier will adhere to basic hygiene protocols including washing or sanitising hands as often as sensibly possible, disinfecting certain equipment and limiting the amount of unnecessary handling of the equine as possible.

Ian Gajczak Farriery Ltd