



Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic

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Equine Nebulizer for Management of Respiratory Disease

Equine respiratory disease can be a serious condition in horses and improper management can result in long term effects in the lungs and reduced performance. Management is the most important aspect of treating respiratory disease and includes reducing exposure to dusts, mold and pollen, vaccination to prevent infectious respiratory diseases and sometimes medical therapy to control the inflammation in the lungs. Definitely the most important component is reducing the exposure to dust, mold and other irritants. Keeping horses outside, soaking or steaming hay, feeding only good quality hay or cubes and dust control on roads and in arenas are all important.

There are several options available to medically manage respiratory disease. Discussion with your veterinarian and an examination can be important to try to identify what is actually causing the disease and to determine if it is infectious or inflammatory in nature. We may recommend a special procedure called a Broncho alveolar lavage which is a procedure that allows us to take a sample of cells from within the airways of the lungs and send them out for analysis. This will give us more information as to whether your horse may be a bleeder (hemorrhaging into lungs), have allergic airway disease, infection or other problem. We may also perform an endoscopic exam to evaluate the airways and laryngeal area.

Often disease is inflammatory or allergic in nature and systemic bronchodilators (medication that opens the airways up such as Ventipulmin) can be used. Sometimes corticosteroids are also needed to settle down the inflammatory process in the airways. Systemic medications are usually either given by mouth or by injection. Unfortunately systemic medications can become expensive and there is increased risk of potential side effects, especially when using corticosteroids.

A good alternative to systemic medication is the use of a nebulizer. This is a special mask that is put on your horse and medications are put in a chamber and the nebulizer aerosolizes the medication so the horse breaths it in. This takes the medication right to the area where it is needed and minimizes the risk of side effects from the medication.

Equine Nebulizers can be quite expensive to purchase. The Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic has an equine nebulizer that can be rented out on a weekly basis. This will allow clients to start to treat their horses with nebulized medication to treat the respiratory disease until they can purchase their own nebulizer or to try the nebulizer out to see if they would like to purchase one. If a client wishes to purchase a nebulizer, we can order them in.

Because this equipment is quite expensive, a damage deposit will be required for rental purposes which will be refunded when it is returned in good condition. Clients will be expected to work with

their veterinarian on a specific treatment protocol and will be responsible for purchasing any medications that they will use in the nebulizer.