

## **2004 BVCS CONFERENCE**

- Venue

Shaftesbury, Dorset

- Guest Speaker

Dr Chris Cebra, Oregon State University

- Topics

Disorders of the gastrointestinal system:

Oral and oesophageal disorders

Gastric disorders

Diarrhoea

Colic

- Other presentations

Gastric ulceration

Johnes disease

Necrotising oesophagitis

Fly strike

Advances in camelid testing kits

Failure of passive transfer

- Practical sessions

UK Llamas at Beaminster - demonstrations and discussions on handling, management and basic techniques. Demonstration of castration

Wessex Alpacas at East Knowle - ultrasound examination of the abdomen, abdominocentesis and the collection of blood for preparation of plasma

- Report

Conditions of the camelid gastro-intestinal tract was the main topic of this year's annual conference which was based in Shaftesbury

Guest speaker Dr Chris Cebra from Oregon State University began with oral disorders, then worked his way through the entire digestive system, covering a whole range of congenital and acquired problems. Camelids are particularly predisposed to conditions such as malocclusion, tooth root abscesses (covered in depth last year) and oesophageal disorders. The last was followed by a reminder to use only the right side of the neck for intravenous access to prevent iatrogenic damage to the oesophagus

As far as dentition is concerned, Chris told us that camelid molars have the most irregular occlusal surfaces of all herbivores in order to cope with the natural diet of coarse fibre. The same teeth in a horse would call for immediate floating but rasping of these sharp points in a camelid (unless there was evidence of dysphagia secondary to mucosal or lingual damage) would lead to inadequate chewing with subsequent reduced digestibility and weight loss

After dealing with functional problems such as gastric ulceration (often secondary to an unsuitable diet or stress), diarrhoea in adults and youngsters (calf electrolyte replacers should be used at half strength), Chris moved on to the infectious disorders. Of particular importance at the moment is *Eimeria macusaniensis* - colloquially known as iMac or Big Mac as the oocyst is 4 - 5 times larger than others - which is specific to camelids and is becoming increasingly associated with clinical disease

Unlike other coccidial species, it can often cause problems in adult animals encountering it for the first time and having a relatively long pre-patent period (17 - 21 days), infection can sometimes lead to mortality before oocysts are shed in the faeces. Pathological changes begin in the small intestine but diarrhoea is seen only as the spiral colon becomes affected so it can be over a month after infection before the first clinical signs are seen

Diagnosis and treatment of colic warranted an entire session followed by a fascinating practical session. Camelids hardly ever exhibit the violent, active type of process seen in horses. Instead, signs are often subtle and intermittent, so easily missed. By the time Chris finished his presentations, we felt that we had been given a thorough grounding in all aspects of the camelid digestive process, and picked up numerous practical tips en route

Informal case discussions included Johnes disease, necrotising oesophagitis, gastric ulceration, uterine torsion and failure of passive transfer. The latter case involved the use of a new camelid specific IgG test, which is about to be marketed by Vetquip, who kindly sponsored this year's meeting. For further details, contact David Rood on 01954 213100 or [sales@vetquip.co.uk](mailto:sales@vetquip.co.uk)

The two practical sessions varied greatly. Friday afternoon was spent at UK Llamas where we were presented with a series of interesting clinical cases as well as a demonstration of castration. Wessex Alpacas kindly hosted us on Saturday and the group of thirty vets was split into three to cover blood collection for plasma production, a farm walk to discuss breeding stock management and an intensive session on ultrasound imaging of the abdomen, including the best site for abdominocentesis. Stephen Constable of Constable Diagnostic Support Ltd once again provided state of the art equipment as well as valuable tuition. There is already great interest in workshops on ultrasound pregnancy diagnosis which we hope to organise for next summer

However, the undoubted highlight of the weekend was the *Taste of Peru* which preceded the conference dinner on Saturday night. Unlimited supplies of pisco sours accompanied a slide show of the 2003 alpaca fair in Arequipa. As it is held every three years, there is a good chance that we will be able to organise a group visit for 2006



Castration



Dr Chris Cebra demonstrating intravenous technique (above) and ultrasound scanning of the abdomen (on right)

