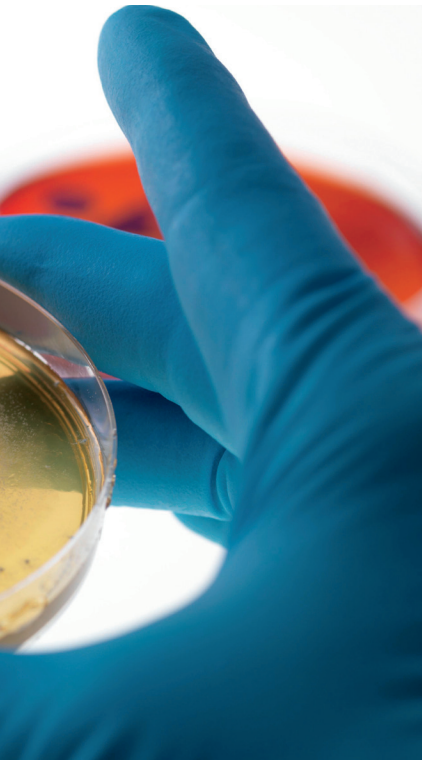




# veterinary world



## A new lung disease on the horizon?

AT congress, mention was made of a newly recognised lung condition first reported in the USA in 2007. Equine multinodular pulmonary fibrosis (EMPF) is a disease where horses develop hard, fibrous lumps on the surface of their lungs. It leads to weight loss, loss of appetite, coughing, rapid breathing and fever.

A particular variety of equine herpes virus, EHV 5, appears to be associated with the disease, although little is known about how it is transmitted or the prevalence of the virus throughout the general horse population.

Horse vets in the UK have been following this unfolding story with interest, but more for academic interest than clinical concern. But

in the week before the congress, Liverpool Vet School reported that it had diagnosed two cases of this disease in the UK — and both horses also carried the EHV 5 virus.

Vets from Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary reported six more cases, only one of which appeared to recover after expensive treatment with an antiviral therapy.

We do not know whether the disease has been present at a very low level in this country for some time and has not been recognised, or whether it is new. For the time being, it is not something we should be unduly worried about, but further clinical research is on the cards.

Has the disease been present at a very low level in this country for some time? //



Concerns about the passport system's efficacy appear to have been validated

## An identity crisis

WE all know that every horse is supposed to have a passport, but because these documents may be lost, many horses end up with two or more. This is because their new owners simply apply for a new one when a horse changes hands with no paperwork.

Local authorities are supposed to be responsible for administering and enforcing equine passport regulations.

Researchers at Newmarket and Cambridge used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain data from local authorities about the extent to which they were undertaking this responsibility.

The researchers asked 202 local authorities for the number of passports that had been checked between 2005 and 2010 in their respective areas and for levels of non-compliance with the regulations. About a third of local authorities admitted that they never checked any horse passports and a further 20% said that they did check passports but did not keep proper records. This means that less than 50% of authorities were able to supply meaningful data.

So, this means that in the five years between 2005 and 2010 only about 17,000 passports were checked across the whole of the UK — that's less than 0.2% of the total horse population. A significant proportion of these passports either contained inaccurate information, or were simply missing.

The research team concluded, rather generously, that the results suggest that collated passport data in the National Equine Database "may contain significant inaccuracies". Surprise, surprise! H&H

## A little of what you fancy...

THE practice of routinely giving tit-bits to horses is frowned upon in many circles, because there is a general feeling that it can lead to over-confident horses that become nippers.

A research team from the University of Rennes, France, investigated whether positive reinforcement techniques (food rewards) were a benefit or a hindrance in the behaviour of yearlings being handled for the first time.

They took 23 unhandled yearlings and split them into two groups. One group of 12 animals was trained to stand still on a voice command and to become compliant to routine handling procedures, such as brushing, picking up their feet and having their temperature taken. They were handled patiently and quietly, but were never given any reward other than normal vocal encouragement.

The second group was treated exactly the same way, but given a small food reward when responding to the voice command.

The results were quite conclusive. The yearlings



It would appear that feeding treats is beneficial in training terms

rewarded positively with a food treat learned everything more quickly, remembered the training better and showed less bad behaviour, such as kicking or biting. They sought the company

of humans more readily and were more compliant when they were broken in.

In short, there were marked long-term benefits in feeding young horses tit-bits as rewards.