

Welfare issues: beat the credit crunch!

Horses are expensive animals to keep and with the current climate; increases in mortgage rates, food prices and fuel costs it is inevitable that some owners may be feeling the pinch. The fundamentals of good horse management should never be done cheaply or delayed. Vet visits and treatments, good farriery, dental checks by a qualified professional and worm control are essential, as are insurance, secure fencing and housing, good quality food and vehicle maintenance. Good quality products and professional services should actually help reduce the need for lots of extras and expensive emergencies. However, there are many things you can do to reduce the monthly bills.

Products: cut down on non-essential supplements, don't just read what the manufacturer tells you, research products. Baby shampoo is usually fine for horses,

baby oil detangles and adds coat shine, vegetable oil can be used as hoof oil and you can make your own fly spray! (Recipes on the web!)

Assess your horse's **lifestyle**, you may be able to find a cheaper livery or many yards now offer flexible versions of livery; part DIY, consider whether you can contribute further to reduce costs. Bedding and feed is expensive, turn your horse out as much as possible. Rubber matting, although costly to install will reduce bedding costs and quickly pay for itself. If you are on a yard, think of ways of **sharing services** and **bulk buying** to cut costs. Sharing lifts and trailers will help with fuel costs.

Have a clearout, sell unwanted tack items and equipment. **Make do and mend**, repair rugs and keep tack in good condition with regular cleaning. You could also try bagging and selling manure!

STAFF NEWS

Congratulations to Lucy Millership one of our Bromsgrove receptionists who has recently given birth to baby 'Billy', born on the 11th January weighing 8lb10oz. She hopes to be back with us before the end of the year. Another of our receptionists, Claire Welsh is also leaving us temporarily, with the baby due imminently. We wish her and the future new arrival, (boy or girl!) the very best.

We are sorry to lose Louise Taylor, receptionist at our Equine Unit who has left us, although **congratulations** are needed as she has been successful in securing a place within the police force, which has been her ambition. Good luck Louise!

Bromsgrove receptionist Amie Dyer, following 6 years of employment with us has now moved upstairs to our office's and has the title Practice Administrator.



Bromsgrove **welcomes** a new full time receptionist Helen Beesley. Also, Jeanette Davies who joins us part-time, providing maternity cover. Janine Ward, a familiar face having worked on reception at our Hagley branch will now be working at Bromsgrove.

At our Hagley branch, Sharon Carter (pictured left), joins the team part-time as Assistant Practice Manager and Elle Haskey (right), Vet-nurse: RVN Bsc(hons), started full time in December. Anna Hutchinson and Harriet Webb also joined this year as part-time receptionists.

TOXIC RAGWORT

Ragwort, a native species to the British Isles is a weed specified under the weeds act 1959. It contains alkaloid toxins that are poisonous to horses, all grazing animals and now evidently humans. The effect of the toxin is cumulative and as it builds in the body has debilitating or fatal consequences. All land owners have a responsibility to control the spread of ragwort and the British Horse Society are trying to increase awareness with **Ragwort Awareness Week, 20-24 April**. Ragwort can be recognised by its dense clusters of dark yellow daisy like flowers & pretty leaf with feathery edges. Mature weeds grow to 2-3 ft and have a easily identifiable red stem. In the first year of growth ragwort has a dense rosette of leaves low to the ground. This is ideally when it should be removed because each flower produces thousands of seeds, spread by the wind. For further information on Ragwort and controlling its spread contact the BHS-welfare@bhs.org.uk

