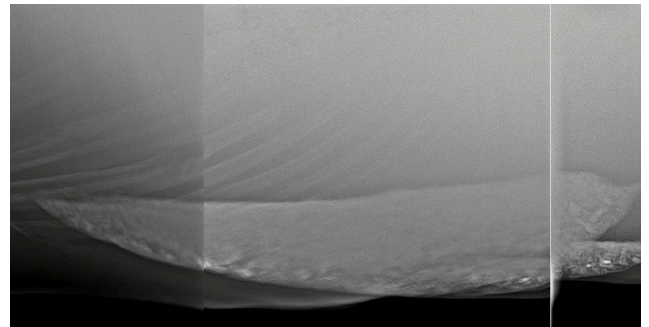


Sand Burden

Client Information Sheet

Clinical signs of a sand burden

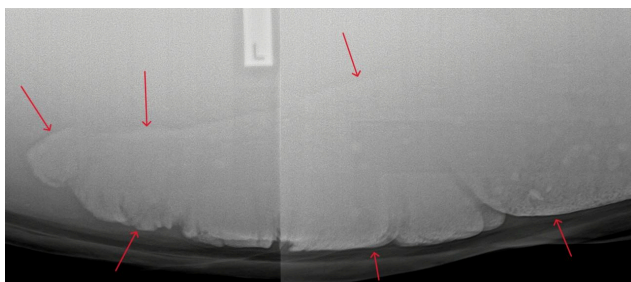
The most common clinical signs of a sand burden include weight loss, a poor coat condition and intermittent diarrhoea, which always seems to resolve on its own. As the sand travels through the digestive tract, it can irritate the gut lining which can result in colic or repeat episodes of colic if the sand burden itself is not treated. At times there may be limited or no clinical signs associated with the sand, especially if the sand burden is small. However it is important to note that sand can accumulate over time and a once small problem can become a much larger one if left untreated.



Diagnosis

You may commonly see your veterinarian auscultate your horse for sand (listen to its abdomen with a stethoscope). When sand is moving within the digestive system, it sounds like 'waves on the beach' which is what we are listening for! It is important to note however that auscultation can only confirm if sand is present and cannot be used to completely rule out the presence of sand. We have seen many cases where no sand is auscultated, however we know the horses are full of sand and it has been confirmed on radiographs.

The best way to diagnose sand is abdominal radiographs, which can confirm the presence of sand and also the quantity of sand. This information can then be used to formulate an appropriate treatment plan. Before and after radiographs can also be helpful in determining the success of a treatment plan and ensure the sand has actually been removed.



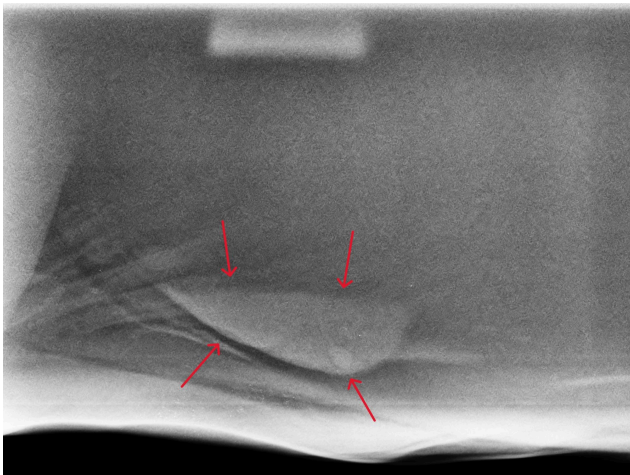
Treatment

The gold standard for the treatment of sand is the use of a combination of psyllium, paraffin oil and epsom salts to move the sand out of the digestive system. Depending on the amount of sand present, we may recommend a few different treatment regimes. Some of the common ones are:

For smaller sand burdens or as a follow on from a drench, we may recommend feeding psyllium at home. The dose rate for feeding psyllium is 1g psyllium per kg of horse for 7 days (so 500g of psyllium per day for 7 days for a 500kg thoroughbred). This can be repeated every 4-6 weeks during high risk periods (during summer where there is no pasture on the ground or after the first rains when the grass starts to shoot up). This can be a cheaper alternative to pelletised versions such as sandXpell and in-Sand-out however generally is less palatable. You can try mixing it with oil, molasses or grated carrot to entice horses to eat it, but this may not be ideal with our horses and ponies on a 'weight watchers' program. Try to avoid mixing it with water though as it turns into a gel. If using a pelleted version then follow the instructions on the packet, although please note that many packet directions underdose so please ensure they are still receiving the 1g of psyllium/ kg of horse.

If a larger sand burden is present, we may recommend a drench or a series of consecutive drenches to move the sand. Once to twice daily in a hospital setting may be needed for larger sand burdens, as a single drench is unlikely to remove enough sand in these cases.

Unfortunately sand moving through the digestive tract can be uncomfortable, as many treatments rely on irritating the lining of the digestive system to actually move the sand through. This can result in colic, in which case all use of psyllium must be stopped (speak to your veterinarian if at any time you are concerned). Regardless, if sand is left untreated, it can continue to accumulate and in cases where colic cannot be resolved through medical treatment alone, surgical manual evacuation of the large colon may be required (physically scooping sand out of the digestive system). It is of course much better to prevent this if at all possible!



Prevention

There are a few things you can implement at home that can help prevent the accumulation of sand. These are listed here below:

- Provide your horse or pony with adequate amounts of roughage e.g. hay roll in paddock. Roughage helps to shift any sand through and prevent a build up and also prevents bored horses from fossicking through the sand for green shoots.
- Avoid feeding horses on sand: lay down large areas of rubber matting (or second hand lino or even carpet can be cheaper alternatives) underneath any feed buckets or hay nets and even under and around your hay roll. This prevents them picking up sand as they forage anything dropped off the floor.
- Use sawdust or straw for bedding rather than sand.
- Feed horses in feed bins rather than throwing feed onto the ground.
- Implement the use of psyllium at home into your routine especially during high risk periods. Many clients will do a 5 day course of psyllium on the first week of every month as a sand prevention/ management program.