

Liver Case Study

The liver has multiple responsibilities including nutrient and toxin absorption. It has a large ability to cope with insults however, clinical signs will become apparent when 60% of the liver is damaged.

Signs can include jaundice (a yellowing of the gums or white of eyes), weight loss and in severe cases neurological signs such as head pressing and blindness.

This pony was presented to vet Stuart after developing excessive sunburn. Unfortunately, a large proportion of his body was white haired so this sun burn covered his face, muzzle, his legs and around his eyes as seen in the pictures below. Blood evaluation showed an increase in liver enzymes (indicating liver damage) as well as bile acids, indicating impaired liver function.



Hairloss and reddening of the skin on face and legs



A liver biopsy was performed with the pony under sedation and local anaesthetic. This ultrasound scan shows the appearance of the liver.

The results of the biopsy showed the pony to have severe fibrosis (scarring) of the liver, due to ragwort toxicity. However, the changes observed were deemed manageable.

The pony was placed on steroids, to reduce liver inflammation, and antibiotics for the secondary skin infections. He has had regular antibacterial baths and creams applied to sooth his skin whilst avoiding sun contact.



He has shown a great improvement whilst on medication and as you can see from the pictures his skin is less inflamed and has started growing hair again as seen in this picture.

His bloods will be monitored going forward. We will keep you updated on his progress. Liver biopsies are simple to perform and gives a great deal more information on how to treat the liver disease affecting your horse or pony.

If you are concerned about anything discussed then please call us and speak to a vet on 01772 861 300