

NEW SHEEP THIS YEAR

Our agent, Russ Dow of Ontario, Canada, is working on getting all the permits in line for importation of our new Leicester sheep from Tasmania. Mr. Dow will select our new woolies when he travels to that country for the World Sheep Conference. Sheep fans keep your fingers crossed all will go through without a hitch. If so, they should arrive in August or September.

HORSES IN, HORSES OUT

Topsy and Prince and Bill and Bruce came back from T.L.O. at Carter's Grove in mid-February. Ruby and Diamond went out then for a well-deserved vacation. The girls will be back in harness by March.



HENRY WETHERBURN MAKES HIS DEBUT

By Elaine Shirley

January 23rd was a very exciting day for the Devon herd at Colonial Williamsburg with the birth of a Devon bull calf. Alice (who came to us with the name "Great Lot Spring", changed to "Colonial Williamsburg's Alice") was very hospitable and courteous and had her calf in the middle of the day for everyone to see. Several H. I.'s, members of Coach and Livestock, curious passersby, and other C. W. employees attended the birth.

Alice was slightly assisted with a few gentle pulls on the calf by Coach and Livestock staff. She was doing a great job, but we figured why make her work harder than need be. She produced a healthy bull calf. Being a first time mother Alice was a bit confused by the whole thing, but after a few hours she got the hang of being a mom.

The first grade class from Matthew Whaley School came to visit our calf on his second day. Linda Sidebottom and her first graders enjoyed watching the calf and they helped us choose the name "Henry".

Henry will be with his mom until he is weaned at 2½ to 3½ months old. He then has several career options: living the carefree life of a stud bull or working for a living as an ox. Only time will tell what career will choose Henry. Please stop by Wetherburn's and see Alice and Henry.

OBITUARY OF A GRAND OLD LADY

By Allison Harcourt

On Thursday, February 9, we lost Star. We discovered that morning she just didn't look right and suspecting colic (see *Colic—What and Why* this issue) we immediately called the vet. Dr. Doxtater's examination revealed a buildup of gas. Medication was given to ease her discomfort, and hopefully relieve the gas and probable impaction. Unfortunately there is no medication that will reliably accomplish this task itself; all the medication can do is stimulate results.

With their one way digestive tract horses are denied the relief of a good belch to expell excess gas, and their almost 100 feet of small and large intestine complicate any problems.

Throughout the day medication was continued. Although Star's pain eased and she began to perk up, we were unable to relieve the gas.

By afternoon more drastic measures were employed; in an effort to buy some time a trocar was inserted into her cecum (which is a particular section of the large intestine) to expell some of the gas. Hopefully this would give some relief until her system could function again. But this measure could not cure the problem itself.

By early morning the gas was increasing at an alarming rate. Medication could no longer ease Star's pain. The final decision was made and Star was humanely put down. Had we not made this decision the gas would have continued to increase causing violent pain, suffering, rupture of the intestines, and horrible death.

Why did this happen? Perhaps basically because of her age. Star was quite old for a horse. Her digestive system had slowed and weakened to the extent that what may have been a lesser problem for a younger animal, was actually a real danger to an elderly horse.

Colic is very frustrating to both horseowners and veterinarians. Sometimes in spite of all the proper management possible a baffling and potentially fatal case of colic can strike. For the last 10 years equine practitioners have been conducting intensive research into colic including treatment and recovery. In 1985 the Morris Animal Foundation began funding large scale surveys of colic cases whose findings help practitioners better understand treatments. The Bolshoi Colic Research Program was founded in 1980 initially as a five year research effort. The program has grown from its original six donors to a nationwide effort supporting about 42 research projects. Horse owners continue to learn and hope that someday we will be able to more effectively combat and cure the killer that strikes all types of horses.

We will all miss Star. I am just one in a long line of people who worked with and care about Star. I think

we all have special memories of her. The phrase "she lived a long and happy life" may seem trite, but it really does apply to Star. Her twenty-plus years with C. W. were in comfortable surroundings, with easy work, equine companionship, lots of human affection, good care, and cookies. Star gave equally or more for all this. She was always ready to work or to stand patiently. Her most important work may not have been pulling the wagon or cart, but interacting with people. Ask the school children who admired her soft nose and extravagant mane, the 4-Hers who worked with her (some conquering their unease around horses), and her "co-workers" and Williamsburg residents who stopped by to chat. Star just seemed to bring out the best in people. When you were around Star it was easy to understand the old saying about the outside of a horse being good for the inside of a man.

COLIC—WHAT AND WHY

By Karen Smith

Colic is a general term that means intestinal upset usually associated with abdominal pain. It is the number one killer of horses today. Colic comes in several types, all being a life threatening situation in horses.

Flatulent colic is the most common, occurring when there is a collection of gas in the bowel. This is sometimes called spasmodic colic because the accumulation of gas in the bowel causes periodic pain; there will be quiet spells, then violent spells. This is the least serious type of colic, though without medical attention it can easily turn into a more deadly type of colic.

Obstructive colic occurs when there is a hard mass of food or feces in the bowel that prohibits the passage of all material. The pain is not so severe, but is more consistent.

Twisted colic is where the bowel becomes twisted. This type of colic is the most serious kind and is usually fatal. In rare instances a twisted colic may correct itself.

The causes of colic are many. Here are some of the most common:

Parasites—usually damage occurs at an early age, but doesn't show up until the horse is much older.

Weather—this occurs when there is a sudden rise or fall in temperature. This is usually seen most in younger and older horses.

Stress—this can be in any form, just like humans. A couple of examples would be a change in surroundings or a long trip.

Food—poor quality, sudden change, irregular feeding times, too much, or too little.

Water—insufficient water, foul water, irregular watering times, drinking when hot or exhausted.

Sand—common in tidewater area. Usually when grass starts to grow or die out a horse may eat roots and all unintentionally ingesting sand. Also feeding hay on sandy soil gives the horse a chance to pick up sand with it. The sand will accumulate in the bowel.

To prevent colic a horse owner will try and avoid the situations and causes mentioned above. The most important preventatives are frequent deworming and correct feeding and watering.

A PEEP AT OUR SPRING CHICKENS

By Richard Powell

Our first preparations for hatching spring chickens began in mid-January when the best mature birds from our flock were placed together in breeding pens at the Franklin Street stable. Egg collection began about ten days later when enough time had passed to insure that the eggs produced had been fertilized by the chosen roosters, rather than by earlier random breeding. Each egg which is kept for incubation is given a simple individual code that identifies its pedigree, order in the sequence of production, and the date laid. This code is placed in a small record book, along with information about unusual factors that might affect the viability of the embryo, such as cold weather. Should problems arise during incubation the record book often helps to identify the cause as weather, infertile adults, or special nutritional needs.

Incubation began on February 12, and a second clutch of eggs was set two days later, so that the chicks could be separated at hatching and given identifying marks corresponding to their egg codes. Such marks provide basic information about a chick's age and parentage, and thus serve as part of a loose "pedigree". Chicken embryos require 21 days to develop, so our first expected hatch will be on March 5. This spring most of our artificially incubated eggs will come from hybridized adults, as part of our effort to create a useful "dunghill fowl" for display and consumption. The birds reared from the previous mating of an Auracana rooster with English game hens are now being crossed with Dorkings. We hope the result will be larger birds that mature quickly to produce meat and medium-sized eggs. The hybrid chicks raised this spring will come from two separate sets of parents. Next year, birds from these two breedings will be inter-bred (X males/Z females; Z males/X females) to fix the traits of the cross, while encouraging the vigor found in chicks with unrelated parents.

Although incubation of other varieties will be on a smaller scale than last year, we still hope to hatch enough Hamburgs, Dominiques, and others to replace those birds lost during the year. If brooding hens will cooperate, we intend to place several groups of chicks in public areas during April and May. With good luck and good weather we hope to raise eighty to one hundred chicks through a combination of natural and artificial incubation.

MORE SAD NEWS

Tip the ox had to be humanely destroyed. An injury which he suffered a few years ago returned to make his life miserable. It was a problem involving a bone in his leg and it showed up again a little over a year ago. A few months ago his condition worsened and it was determined he should not have to suffer the torture.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? Please write to:
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