

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GASTROSCOPY

by Boehringer Ingelheim

Equine gastric ulcer syndrome (EGUS) is a common condition affecting horses across all disciplines, caused by an imbalance between acid production and mucosal protection in the stomach.

While clinical signs can suggest the presence of EGUS, **gastroscopy remains the only definitive diagnostic tool for confirming ulcer presence, severity and location.**¹ This procedure allows veterinarians to distinguish

between equine squamous gastric disease (ESGD) and equine glandular gastric disease (EGGD), two different syndromes in terms of pathophysiology and expected response to treatment and prevention strategies.

Providing gastroscopy as a service significantly enhances veterinarians' ability to optimize EGUS diagnosis and treatment by delivering more accurate, evidence-based care. Clinically, gastroscopy offers multiple advantages for both veterinarians and horse owners, including:

- **Early and accurate diagnosis** prevents prolonged or unnecessary medication use, reducing total long-term costs for the horse owner.

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- **Monitoring treatment response via follow-up gastroscopy** allows veterinarians to optimize treatment plans based on ulcer healing status.¹

- **When ulcers are not found,** appropriate diagnostics can be pursued to identify other sources of

musculoskeletal or visceral pain based on the horse's clinical signs—helping avoid unnecessary suffering.

From an operational standpoint, there are multiple ways to structure gastroscopy services that may improve efficiency and maximize the return on your equipment investment, including:

- **Group gastroscopy procedures on specific days** to minimize equipment setup and streamline workflow.
- **Offer specials for on-farm gastroscopy** if a certain number

of horses can be present and scoped during one visit.

- **Provide a discount on recheck gastroscopy** when paid for at the time of the initial exam.
- **Bundle gastroscopy with other diagnostics** as part of a comprehensive poor performance workup.

Gastroscopy as a Profitable Service

An equine veterinarian in the Midwest was initially hesitant to invest in a gastroscope for her clinic, given the approximately \$30,000 upfront equipment cost. However, with ulcer prevalence as high as 60% in performance horses and up to 50% in pleasure or leisure horses,^{2,3} she recognized that demand for evidence-based ulcer diagnosis was growing in both her performance and backyard horse clientele.

To justify the purchase, the veterinarian developed a gastroscopy service plan for her practice. She set the price per procedure at \$375, aligning with industry averages. By scheduling two gastroscopies per week, she generated approximately \$3,000 in monthly revenue, allowing her to recoup the full cost

of the equipment in less than a year. Beyond the initial diagnostic procedure, the practitioner saw an increase in revenue from follow up gastroscopies, targeted ulcer treatment plans, and even lameness exams in those horses without ulcers.

Within the first year, gastroscopy became one of the clinic's most requested diagnostic procedures, contributing an estimated \$36,000 in annual revenue. By educating clients on the value of accurate ulcer diagnosis over "treat and see" approaches, the veterinarian not only strengthened trust with horse owners but also positioned her practice as a leader in equine gastric health.

REFERENCES

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³McClure SR, Glickman LT, Glickman NW. Prevalence of gastric ulcers in show horses. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 1999;215:1130-1133.

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