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Report stresses impact of colic

Published: 10/11/2006 (Sport)

NEVER underestimate the damage that colic can cause in the horse world. That was the message from Chris Proudman, from the University of Liverpool equine hospital, who described the condition as "the single most important cause of equine mortality and a major cause of economic loss to equine industries worldwide".

A report in the US estimated that annual losses due to colic there for 1998-9 amounted to \$115 million, while an investigation of a thoroughbred training yard of up to 60 horses had noted 15 colic cases in three months.

Proudman noted that research into colic over the past 20 years had narrowed the causes down to intestinal parasites, diet, time of year and individual susceptibility.

He said: "It doesn't take a genius to work out that what animals eat has a major influence on gut function and intestinal disease. There is strong evidence to suggest that if a horse's diet is changed abruptly, it is at increased risk for a period of seven to 14 days.

"One of the most rapidly fatal colic types tends to occur more frequently in spring and autumn, while 70 per cent of another type occurs in November, December and January."

Both could be due to dietary change at a certain time of year.

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