

Horse News and Views



- ◆ A number of anatomical differences between the horse and the donkey can challenge the first-time donkey owner and their veterinarian. Donkeys have an obscured jugular furrow (the place where blood samples are taken or tranquilizers are given). The cutaneous coli muscle hides the middle third of the jugular vein. (Burnham S. L. Anatomical Differences of the Donkey and Mule In: Proceedings of the 48th Annual AAEP Convention. 2002: 102-109.)
- ◆ Equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM) is an important neurological disease of the horse caused by the protozoa, *Sarcocystis neurona*. The opossum is the definitive host of this parasite. Opossums shed sporocysts (the intermediary form of this parasite) into the environment, where they are consumed by intermediate hosts, which include the cat, skunk, raccoon, armadillo and sea otter. The sporocysts develop into sarcocysts in the muscle of these intermediate hosts. The life cycle is complete when opossums feed on dead intermediate hosts (e.g., road kills) containing infective sarcocysts. The opossum can shed one billion sporocysts into the environment. Horses become infected when they consume feed contaminated with opossum feces. Preventative measures include removing opossums and opossum habitats from farms and burying dead cats, raccoons and skunks. (Saville W. J. A. *et al.* Prevention of EPM In: Proceedings of the 48th Annual AAEP Convention. 2002: 181-185).
- ◆ How long does a horse live and what is the conversion factor for horse years to human years? At a recent British Equine Veterinary Association meeting, it was reported that the average horse lives 28 ± 5 years and the conversion factor of 2.2 should be used to compare a horse's age to human years. The 45-year-old pony named Tawney, which was living in Thorold, Ontario in 1999, was equivalent to a 99-year-old person.

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This version is available for distribution after January 1, 2003.

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