

Medical Corner

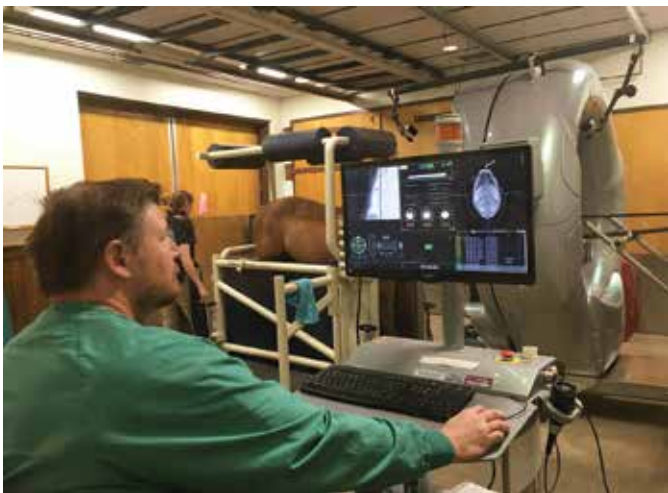
A Game Changer for Dental & Sinus Diagnostics

By Dr. James A. Brown

Nasal discharge in horses can be both alarming and frustrating. Plus coming from both nostrils can indicate guttural pouch or lower airway infection, whereas smelly pus coming from one nostril is commonly associated with sinusitis and dental infection-related sinusitis. It is important to have a veterinarian exam the horse quickly, to determine the cause and to insure there is not a contagious situation such as strangles, which can impact an entire barn.

During the exam, a veterinarian will do a palpation of the head for swelling, an oral exam and perhaps an upper airway endoscopy. The vet may also assess the surface of the teeth for abnormalities such as fractures, caries of the infundibulum, and open pulp chambers, which can give a clue as to the cause of the sinus infection. Despite a thorough exam, sometimes the reason for sinusitis may not be evident and imaging of the head will be the most expeditious means for accurate diagnosis. The complex nature of the horse's sinus compartments, combined with opacity (whiteness) from fluid, often make diagnosis difficult. Horses treated with antibiotics and lavage of the sinus compartments may have temporary relief but, in many cases, after treatment is discontinued, the problem returns which can be frustrating.

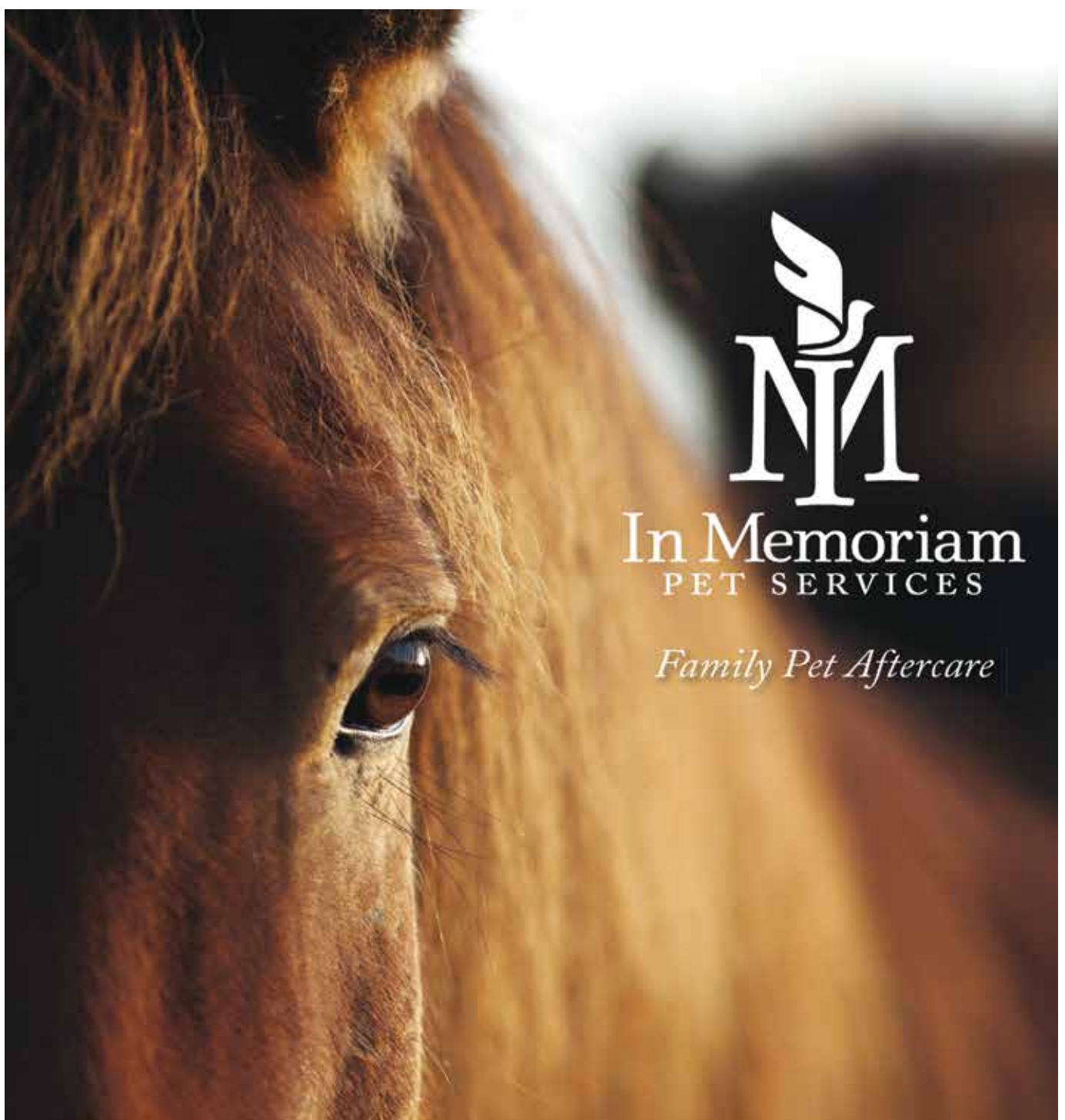
For horses with sinusitis or suspected dental issues, Computed Tomography (CT) can be a game changer. A CT scan produces 3-D images and has major advantages over radiographs as the scan can be viewed in different image planes. A CT scan can identify pathological changes both within the tooth and around the root area where infections tend to occur. Until recently, CT was performed under general anesthesia; however, standing CT units, such as EMC's Pegaso unit are now available. Horses are sedated for the 53 second scan which provides a thorough evaluation of the horse's teeth and sinus compartments. Getting to the root of nasal discharge is essential to treatment, cure and return to work for horses.



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Dr. Brown received his bachelor of veterinary science with honors from the University of Melbourne in Melbourne, Australia, and also earned a graduate diploma in agricultural economics from the University of New England in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia. After conducting research on upper airway diseases in racehorses, he completed a residency in equine reproduction at the University of California at Davis and subsequently achieved board certification in the American College of Theriogenologists. This certification acknowledges exceptional expertise in animal reproduction and obstetrics.

Dr. Brown earned his master's degree in biomedical and veterinary sciences by completing a three-year surgical residency at the Equine Medical Center, which included conducting research on methods for culturing stem cells. He achieved Diplomate status through the American College of Veterinary Surgeons in 2011.



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