

## Part A

### Social behaviour and handling of large animals

You are a vet new to a large animal practice. You have been called to see Dancer, a 2-year-old horse that has been injured on his hind leg, presumably when tangled in a fence. The owner is a long-time client of the practice and owns several horses and a small mob of sheep.

When you get there, Dancer is in a paddock with other horses and the owner's husband, Tim, has not been able to catch the horse (his wife Tina, who owns the horse, is not home yet). When Tim walked into the paddock to catch Dancer he ran away each time Tim came close and tried to put the halter on, even though Dancer was somewhat lame.



<https://uniquecarriagehire.com.au/horses/>

**Q1. Fence injuries are very common in horses. What innate behaviour contributes to this type of injury?**

**Q2. What are some of the reasons Tim may have trouble catching the horse and what could be the consequence if he keeps trying?**

Tim suggests using a bucket of feed to try to get the horse to come to him.

**Q3. What problem may he encounter doing this?**

Just as Tim walks in the paddock with a bucket of feed, his wife Tina comes home. She walks in the paddock with halter and lead rope, without looking at the injured horse, just walks casually past him and then returns to give him a pat. She puts the lead rope around his neck and then calmly puts on the halter.

**Q4. Why would this method be more successful?**

Your car with your equipment is parked 50m down the laneway behind a row of bushes, so she slowly leads the injured horse there. However, the further he walks away from his paddock the more his body language changes.

**Q5. What body language can you see in the horse below and what emotions do you think the horse is experiencing? Why does he show this behaviour?**



When you try to examine him when you get near your car, he keeps moving around and calling out, he appears quite agitated. One of the horses in the paddock is constantly calling out as well.

**Q6. Why is this situation dangerous and who is in danger?**

**Q7. What might be a better strategy for where to examine the horse?**

You give him some time to calm down while you get a general history of the horse from the owner. When you look back at the horse, he is behaving in a manner similar to the horse in the image below.



**Q8. What body language do you see and what emotions do you think the horse might be experiencing?**

Despite the appearance of the horse, as soon as you try to assess the injury on the back leg the horse becomes unsettled again. The injury looks like it will need treatment and bandaging, so you decide to sedate the horse. However, you are not sure if the horse will stand still while you inject him. You decide to use a nose twitch to assist you.

**Q9. What is a nose twitch, and how do they work? What other type of twitch (body parts) are sometimes used?**

Once the horse is sedated, he is relaxed and allows you to treat him. You ask the owner if they have anywhere to keep the horse confined for a couple of weeks while the leg heals. The owner points to a row of stables about 100m away.

**Q10. What are some of the problems with stable confinement and how can they be minimised? Consider the natural behaviour of the horse.**



Image: dissolve.com

While she is putting the horse in one of the stables with another horse, you mention to the husband that when driving up the driveway you saw noticed one of his sheep grazing on its knees. You suggest to the owner that it may be lame, so he goes and has a look.



[This video](#) shows what happened when the owner approached the sheep. He says none of the sheep appeared lame.

**Q11. Why did the sheep all run away together and why would he not have seen a lame sheep?**

However, in a corner of the paddock he did find one of the sheep laying on its back. Is this normal behaviour?

**Q12. Explain how a sheep may end up on its back and what the consequences can be if not assisted to get up.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lMGnrzUytI>

When the horse owner returns, she asks if she can have some eye ointment for an older horse with an infected eye. As this horse has not had an eye infection before, you suggest that it is better for you to examine the eye first. The horse is very relaxed and used to being handled so easily caught in the paddock. Just as you are about to have a close look at the eye, the owner's mobile phone rings. She apologises that she has to take the call but tells you to just tie the horse up to the fence and examine it, he will be fine.

**Q13. Would you follow the owner's instructions? Why or why not?**

After the owner gets off the phone and you have examined the eye you give her some ointment. The horse was a bit apprehensive when you approached the eye, so you give the owner some tips on how to put the ointment in.

**Q14. What method do you suggest?**



Image:horseclass.com

While you are packing up the husband returns and comments that he had another look at the sheep from a distance, and he too noticed one of the sheep grazing on its knees. Perhaps you can come back to have a closer look at this animal? You have another appointment to go to, but since you are in the neighbourhood you can come back after that. He says that he will keep an eye on the lame sheep and try and catch it before you come back. He has just build a new holding yard for the sheep, so he will move the lame sheep there.

**Q15. What could be the problem with this approach? What would you suggest to him?**

When you return later in the day the owner has identified the lame sheep and marked it with a spray mark. He has kept an additional 3 sheep in the yard. (Pretend only one is marked!)





<https://quillcards.com/blog/smit-marks-to-identify-sheep/>

**Q16. How would you handle the lame sheep and examine its feet?**

The skin between the toes of both front feet is swollen and inflamed which is very painful. This is a bacterial infection and needs topical treatment for a few days, while keeping the animal confined on some nice dry bedding. You check a few of the other sheep and they show some mild signs as well, which requires a weekly foot bath.



<http://www.flockandherd.net.au/sheep/images/dorpfootrot07.jpg>

The owner suggests the lame sheep can be kept in one of the stables.

**Q17. What do you advise the owner how to house this animal in a stable?**

You leave the owner with some information on a weekly foot bath for the other sheep and leave. It has been a long day.

## **Part B**

### **Behavioural concepts across species**

Some of these questions have many aspects and might not have only one answer - it might depend on their living and production circumstances. Discuss the various scenarios within your group.

**18. Stereotypies are common in many animal species.**

- a) **What is the definition of stereotypic behaviour? Give 3 examples of stereotypic behaviour in horses.**

- b) **Why might they develop and persist? Once established, should they be prevented from being expressed?**

- c) **In cats, overgrooming can be a stereotypical behaviour. What are the similarities or differences from stereotypies in horses?**



**19. There are some fundamental differences in the behaviour of horses, sheep and cattle vs dogs and cats, who are predominantly predator species. This can be partly explained by the type of species (prey/predator), partly by their intraspecies social structure, partly by the domestication process and partly by the experiences they may have had with humans throughout their lifetime (positive and negative).**

- a) Discuss how the type of species affects behaviour when faced with novel or fear-provoking situations.**

- b) Discuss how domestication may have affected behaviour in different species. What have been the strongest drivers for selection of breeding animals in the different species?**

- c) Discuss the different experiences these species may have had with humans and how this may affect their responses to humans when faced with novel or fear-provoking situations. Think particularly about the early experiences with humans (you will not have covered this a lot yet for some species– do some research and/or ask a staff member)**

**20. What impact do you think handling might have on production in livestock species? (You might need to do some research. Dr Paul Hemsworth has done a lot of work in this area.)**

