

RANCH AND RANGE.

Indigestion Acute or Gastric Tympanitis.

(Address by Dr. F. H. Cassells at the recent meeting of the Washington Medical Veterinary Association.)

Definition of.—Disturbance of the function of digestion unassociated with perceptible textural change or lesion of the stomach.

Causes.—This form of indigestion, which is more alarming in its symptoms and development than any other, is chiefly caused by filling the stomach to excess with food materials, which, from their mechanical bulk and physical unfitness for solution or for being sufficiently broken down and converted into a pulp capable of being passed on, or with such as from their special chemical characters, or the chemical changes which they undergo on being taken into the stomach are rendered similarly unfit for assimilation, the character of the foods are bulky, but not necessary indigestible or unnutritious, and liable to undergo fermentative changes in the stomach, but it may also follow the use of any food conveyed into the stomach without sufficient mastication, and incorporation with natural secretions.

The state of the animal itself, such as physical exhaustion, a period of starvation, operates materially in causing the existence of acute indigestion. Horses which have been subjected to long and hard work, necessitating the animal to fast, weakens the vital powers generally, especially the digestive functions. In such cases the food will be readily taken and the amount consumed is often in excess of what is usually taken. Then should the food be rather bulky, difficult of digestion or susceptible of rapid chemical changes, the consequences are likely to be troublesome. I would just state here that it is a very foolish idea which some teamsters have, that after a horse has done a very hard day's work or been a few hours longer without food than usual he should have a considerable more to eat, in fact give him all he can cram into himself, so that he will be able to withstand a long drive the succeeding day or immediately after he has got through eating.

Symptoms.

The symptoms are generally sudden in development, at least they follow immediately as sequels to the condition of impaction, the animal having previously been in his usual state of health. The symptoms are not invariably of a similar character, but may be arranged in two groups.

They may with trifling modifications be characterized as gastric or abdominal. The earliest indications are those of fugitive abdominal pains, lying down resting for a little, rising to the feet, and again resuming the recumbent position, which is shortly followed by greater restlessness, continued or interrupted pawing with the fore feet, protruding of the head, and, in some cases, eructation and attempts to vomite, and a discharge of liquid matters from the nose.

When the distention of the stomach is considerable, consisting of gas and solid ingesta, the animal may show signs of acute pains, and will frequently attempt to vomit. While in this condition he will be very careful in laying down, but as the disease advances he will become so overcome by the acute pains, he will throw himself down in a violent manner, heedless of where the poor unfortunate veterinarian or anybody else is standing. But I can say, as far as I am concerned, it is as much pleasure to get into a box stall where one of those poor dumb creatures are in such agony and pain as to cause the perspiration and steam to roll off them like from a huge log heap burning, and administer medicine

and treat them, as to go to an opera and occupy a seat in a ten-dollar box with all the pleasures of life.

Other Symptoms of the Disease.

In some instances the animal is in a semi-comatosed condition. He stands with his head low and inclined to press the forehead against some resisting body. He is moved with difficulty and refuses to eat or take notice of anything whatsoever. When the abdominal pains are a marked feature the pulse and respirations are uniformly increased in frequency and somewhat altered in character, but when the comatosed condition exists both of these are less frequent and the pulse is full and of considerable resisting power.

Course and Termination.

Mild cases of engorgement of the stomach, many of which are spoken of as colic, even when attended with more or less uneasiness and slight bloating may of themselves become relieved, especially when the material causing the distention is soft in character and likely to undergo removal rather easily or in cases where the animal has not been previously debilitated by exhausting work or the organ itself weakened through former attacks of a similar nature. The more severe cases, if left to themselves are liable to prove fatal by rupture of the coats of the stomach or by causing gastritis, or through cerebral complications. Such fatal cases are most commonly seen after the animal has received a full meal after a period of fasting, where the food is taken into the stomach in a weakened and exhausted condition. I have noticed in a great majority of cases that horses which are habitually greedy feeders are more liable to the diseases than any other class of horses. One of the principal causes of the accumulation of gas in the stomach according to my theory is that when the animal has received a larger amount of food than the gastric forces can work on, or in cases where the animal has been watered after feeding, the water which is taken into the stomach dilutes the gastric juice to such an extent that the action of this gastric secretion cannot dissolve the food, but has such an action on the food as to cause fermentation to take place readily, and then the gas which is formed by the chemical changes destroys the hydrochloric acid which is continually being secreted from the glandular portion of the stomach. Thus its proper functions are destroyed, owing to the insufficient amount of hydrochloric acid to overcome the formation of the gas. I have never been able to find anybody who would back me up in this belief. But you will see by the manner in which I treat the disease and the success with which my labors are crowned is the best proof which I can produce.

Be Sure First.

When you are called in to treat an animal which the owner says has colic, examine the patient very carefully, endeavor to satisfy yourself as to what organ or organs are the seat of the disease, and I will venture to say that in 75 per cent of cases which are supposed to be colic you will find it is nothing more nor less than acute indigestion, either in a mild or severe form. After I have satisfied myself in this way, I proceed to treat him accordingly. I will now describe the treatment I use in a very severe case for a horse which will weigh 1,200 or 1,300 pounds.

The Treatment Used.

I give, hypodermically, from 2 to 4 grains of morphine, conjoined with 1 grain of pilocarpine. I immediately give 4 ounces of what is known as hydrochloric chlorate solution; following this I give fluid extract belladonna, fluid extract cannabis indica.

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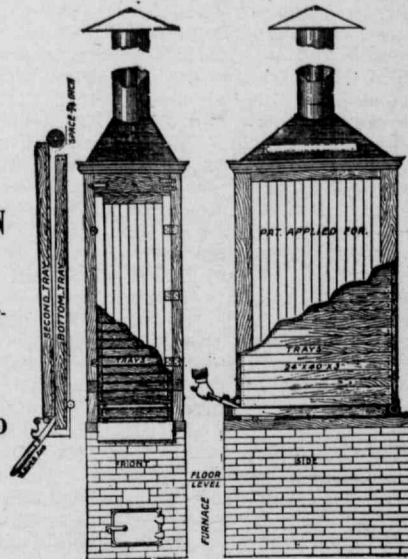
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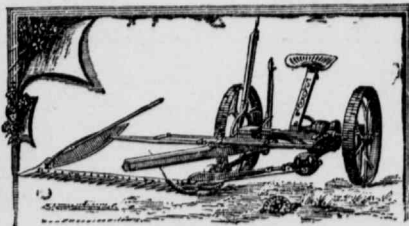
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