

**COPD – Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease  
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE**

**Information Sheet WS054/07**

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**COPD**

**What is it?**

The acronym stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. It is the modern term, replacing the old names 'broken wind' or 'heaves' but the latter term is creeping back into the literature.

It is characterised by a chronic tendency to cough and to breathe with forced expiration, on account of the narrowing of bronchioles. The resting respiration rate is usually markedly increased from the normal rate, which is below 12 per minute. Exercise tolerance is reduced.

**How does it occur?**

There is an allergic element, usually with pollen or mould spores acting as an aggravating stimulus. Viral infection can alter immune responses, as can [vaccination](#).

**Are there preventive measures to take?**

It is wise to ensure good ventilation, with freedom from draughts. This is commonly a challenge in stable buildings. Opening a window is not as effective or healthy as ridge ventilation, with insulation of the roof to iron out effects of cold or hot weather. It is also advisable to restrict or to remove access to hay moulds (hay dust) and straw moulds (straw dust). Hay can be power-washed, to lessen dust (soaking overnight will remove vital nutrients). Ammonia, from urine in the bedding, can be an aggravating factor. Avoid shavings, for this reason. Hemp deep-litter bedding may help prevent the release of dust and ammonia from the floor. If the horse or pony is able to out-winter, so much the better. If spring-time pollens are the trigger, there is little that can be done to prevent access. Tree pollens, especially elder, are very allergenic.

### **Is it responsive to treatment?**

In former times, this was considered to be the end of the horse. Happily, that is far from the case nowadays.

The conventional response to this disease is to use broncho-dilating drugs and sometimes anti-inflammatory agents. These will reduce symptoms and can produce satisfactory palliation, while the drugs are being used, but do nothing to reduce the actual disease.

Using natural medicine methods, especially [homeopathy](#), we aim to cure the disease or at least reduce the tendency. Happily we succeed in these endeavours in most cases. The prescription is chosen on the basis of constitutional features, since this is a chronic disease, and there may be a need for symptom-based prescribing in support.

Common homeopathic remedies, that have worked in past cases, are *Thuja*, *Arsenicum*, *Calcarea*, *Silica*, *Lycopodium*, *Nux vomica*, *Natrum muriaticum*, *Spongia*, *Cuprum aceticum*, *Tuberculinum*, *Phosphorus*, *Bryonia* and *Pulsatilla*.

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