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Inaugural Mongol Derby Veterinary Training Program a pioneering success

18 of Mongolia's top equine vets complete a week's intensive training in Ulaanbaatar in preparation for the 2010 Mongol Derby

The seven-day training programme was developed and delivered by FEI four star accredited endurance vet Jenny Weston, of Massey University, New Zealand. Organised in conjunction with Mongolia's Ministry of Agriculture, the pioneering programme aims to both train vets for the Mongol Derby and be part of a broader contribution to standards of horse welfare in Mongolia by The Adventurists, organisers of the Mongol Derby.

The intensive training, which took place at Zaisan Veterinary University in Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, consisted of five days of lecture material and two days' practical training, with a focus on equine medicine and first aid. The eighteen vets were intensively tutored in a wide range of essential topics including lameness, anatomy, dentistry, fluid therapy and wound management. The diagnosis and treatment of problems that are commonly encountered in horses ridden over distances of 30-40 km - as in traditional Mongolian Naadam racing and the Mongol Derby - was well covered and this will be of ongoing benefit to the horses and herders of Mongolia.

The programme also included two days of practical training on the steppe, where the vets got to practise the lessons of the previous week on a wide selection of horses. Aspects of this practical training mirrored the pre and post-ride protocols that are used in the Mongol Derby to check the horses and ensure they complete in excellent condition. The vets themselves acted as jockeys and raced the horses over a distance of about 5 km to demonstrate elements of recovery, including heart rate, hydration levels and gut function, and they were able to practice intravenous catheter placement for fluid therapy, as well as reviewing common drug interventions.

After the training Jenny Weston commented; "The gathering was invaluable, both in the transfer of technical skills, and the chance for vets to come together from all over the country and compare notes. The Chief Veterinary Officer, Mr Orgil, expressed his thanks to The Adventurists for their support of the programme and its benefit to the general horse population of Mongolia."

Tom Morgan, Adventurists founder, remarked; "As well as ensuring we have a top notch veterinary back-up team in place for the Mongol Derby, the training provides the Mongolian vets with the additional skills and techniques to deliver better quality care year-round. The Adventurists are committed to leaving a lasting positive legacy wherever in the world our tentacles reach, and improving the health of the highly-revered native horses is a fitting way to do this in Mongolia"

One of the vets, O. Bayarsaikhan from Tuv aimag, said, "The training was very good because it combined theory and practice, with our time in the classroom leading to interesting instruction in the field. The training materials were especially good because they covered the very latest international veterinary techniques used for horses."

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The Mongol Derby is organised by The Adventurists in partnership with Tengri Group in Mongolia.

Sign up for the 2011 Derby starts in July 2010. There are still a few places available for 2010.