



LAMINITIS



(X-ray showing pedal bone rotation in a laminitic horse)

Laminitis is a disease which causes significant pain and discomfort to affected horses and ponies, mainly during the spring/summer months when the grass is growing and high in carbohydrate, but it is becoming more commonly recognised throughout the year. So we thought we would provide you with an update on what is a debilitating and life-threatening disease for our equine friends.

Classically, laminitis is seen in overweight ponies turned out onto lush grass, but it can occur in all breeds of horses, ponies and donkeys. This is why it is important for owners and keepers to look out for and be able to recognise the signs of laminitis quickly.

Clinical signs of laminitis include reluctance to move, shifting weight from foot to foot, raised digital pulses and hot hooves. A classical heel loading stance, where they appear to be leaning back,

may also be seen. In severe cases your horse/pony may be lying down, reluctant to get up or show similar signs to colic (for example sweating, groaning and laboured breathing).

The causes of laminitis include:

- Ingestion of large amounts of soluble carbohydrate (e.g. fructans) found in new grass or large quantities of cereal based compound feeds.
- Hormonal imbalances e.g. Cushing's disease.
- Equine metabolic syndrome/insulin resistance due to obesity and/or a genetic predisposition.
- Uterine infections, usually post foaling.
- Stress.
- Steroid induced.
- Mechanical trauma e.g. fast work on hard ground, increased loading onto a limb due to a different injury in the opposite limb.

Laminitis is an emergency and you should call your vet at the first signs of the disease, so that treatment can be implemented quickly and the likelihood of pedal bone rotation minimised. Your horse should be moved away from the cause of laminitis e.g. off the pasture. Box rest is recommended to reduce the

stress on the pedal bone in the hoof capsule from moving around. A deep bed of conforming bedding should be provided e.g. shavings, sand or hemp, to maximise the support to the frog and sole of your horse's feet.

Diet should be restricted to low energy, high fibre forage only (e.g. soaked hay) and fed little and often. It is important not to starve your horse as this can upset the gut and lead to abnormal digestion and fermentation which can make the laminitis worse. If your horse is on a restricted diet for a long time it is worth providing a good quality vitamin and mineral supplement to make sure they get all that they need.

Veterinary treatment involves administering non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs e.g. Bute (Equipalazone®), that provides pain relief, but also decreases inflammation in the soft tissues of the foot (particularly the laminae). This minimises further damage to the laminae from the mediators of inflammation that the body produces in the blood. ACP (Sedalin® Gel) is often used for 2 reasons: firstly to dilate the blood vessels and remove toxins by counteracting the constriction of blood vessels in

the foot which restrict blood flow during a laminitic episode, secondly to provide sedation. Partly sedated horses will tend to lie down more taking the weight off their feet and allowing them to heal. Your horse's shoes may need to be removed to allow the hoof to expand, but this is often not done straight away as this can cause more pain in the acute phase of laminitis. Your vet will assess each individual case and remove shoes as necessary. Extra support should be provided to the frog and sole straight away. This can be simply a bandage taped to the frog or Styrofoam pads are very good at supporting both the frog and the sole.

Once the laminitis has stabilised, further treatment usually includes shoe removal and foot x-rays. The x-rays allow the position of the pedal bone in the hoof to be seen and any rotation or sinking noted. Your farrier can then trim and shoe your horse according to the x-rays to make sure the pedal bone remains in the correct position in the hoof. This minimises the risk of the pedal bone rotating through the sole and helps to restore your horse's hoof to normal.

As with most diseases prevention is better than cure. Identifying those individuals at risk of laminitis e.g. those who are overweight or have Cushing's disease is very important. For these horses grazing should be restricted, non-palatable bedding used when boxed, and a good exercise regime should be in place. Please contact the clinic

if you have any questions or need any advice on laminitis.



DISCOUNT MICRO- CHIPPING ONLY £20 (INC. VAT) PER HORSE.

From 1st July 2009 DEFRA made it compulsory for all horses registering for a passport to be micro-chipped. This highlights the fact that micro-chipping is considered an important development in horse identification but **how does it benefit you as a horse owner?**

- It is a **reliable, permanent and tamper-proof** form of identification. So your horse can be easily identified if they are ever separated from you.
- It is a **quick, easy and safe** procedure for your horse to undergo.
- It helps to improve equine breeding programmes and disease surveillance through traceability, improving welfare for the entire horse population.

The main disadvantage to micro-chipping seen by many horse owners is the cost, so we are offering a discount on all microchips implanted before 1st December 2010. Give your horse a very early Christmas present make him identifiable for life!



(Newly refurbished equine room at our Lee Farm practice.)

DIGITAL X-RAY MACHINE

Tony has bought a new toy! We have recently invested in a new mobile x-ray machine (an Eklin® Mark IIG) which will be arriving in the practice mid-September. It will allow us to provide a more prompt and reliable service for x-raying your horse at your yard or in the clinic (in our newly refurbished Equine room! See above). Please ask us about it when we next visit you or give us a ring at the practice if you have any queries.

