



## Equine Newsletter July 2016

**Coombefield Equine Clinic**  
Summerleaze Farm, Axminster



### Laminitis

It's that time of year again, warm and wet perfect for growing grass but not so great for all those laminitic horses and ponies!

#### **What is Laminitis?**

Laminitis is an extremely painful inflammatory condition of the delicate laminae in the hoof. In healthy hooves these delicate (Velcro-like) tissues bind together the inner hoof wall and the pedal bone. Laminitis affects the blood flow to these tissues causing them to weaken. As laminitis develops the attachment of the pedal bone to the hoof wall starts to fail, leaving the pedal bone to rotate and point towards to sole, and in the worst cases to sink right through it.



X-ray of normal horses foot



X-ray of horses foot with severe

Laminitis is most common in the front feet but can affect all four. All breeds of horses and ponies can develop laminitis but it is more common in native types.

#### **What are the signs?**

In severe cases, animals will be unable to move. They will be very uncomfortable often leaning back on their heels, trying to take the weight off their front feet. If very severe they may often lie down to take the weight off their feet completely and often this can be mistaken for colic.



More commonly, milder cases signs can include:

- Increased pulses to the feet (where the digital artery runs over the fetlock), heat in the hooves and pain on pressure of the sole.
- Leaning backwards to take the weight off their front feet.
- Pottery or short strided gait or weight shifting.
- Signs of abnormal hoof growth: hoof rings wider at the heel.

### What are the causes?

Our understanding of the causes of laminitis have dramatically improved over the last few years. It has always been thought that access to lush pasture was the primary cause for laminitis. Research has shown that 90% of laminitis cases have an underlying hormonal cause and it is this that determines whether or not a horse will develop laminitis when turned out onto new pasture. There is a complex link between Equine Cushing's Disease (Pars Pituitary Intermedia Dysfunction – PPID), Equine Metabolic Syndrome and insulin resistance, three hormonal conditions that increase the risk of a horse or pony developing laminitis.

**Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)** – these horses commonly have excess fat storage over their body and become insulin resistant. This condition can be diagnosed with an overnight fasting blood test after a high glucose meal and management tailored accordingly.

**Equine Cushing's Disease** – seen more often in older horses and ponies, although not exclusively. It is due to an enlargement of the pituitary gland at the base of the brain. This causes high levels of circulating ACTH and other hormones that can lead to laminitis. Other signs of Cushing's include an abnormal hair coat and delayed shedding, abnormal fat redistribution, patchy sweating, increased drinking and urination, lethargy and recurrent infections. This is diagnosed by a simple blood test and from June until October the laboratory tests to diagnose Cushing's Disease are free\*.



### Diagnosis – What should I do if I suspect my horse has laminitis?

Sudden onset Laminitis is urgent. Prompt attention and treatment as soon as the signs are recognised are important to help alleviate pain and reduce any long-term damage. It is important to seek veterinary attention. While waiting for the vet, remove from pasture, provide deep bedding and ensure they can reach food (soaked hay) and water. As previously mentioned 90% of laminitis cases are caused by hormonal conditions so it is important that these are tested for.

### How can we treat it?

Emergency treatment includes pain relief, restricting movement and supporting the foot to reduce the risk of pedal bone movement. Longer term treatment will address the painful symptoms and possibly include changes to farriery and management. Often x-rays of your horses feet can be helpful to assess the extent of the problem and enable the farrier to make any necessary corrections. It is also important to treat the underlying cause of the laminitis not just the signs themselves.

### How can we prevent it?

It is really important to remember that laminitis is a multi-factorial problem. It is important to identify any underlying conditions to ensure horses and ponies can be managed appropriately to reduce the risks of further episodes of laminitis.

For more information or if you are concerned your horse or pony may be suffering from laminitis, please call to speak to one of our Equine Vets.



**WIN TWO TICKETS TO HONITON SHOW**

This year Coombefield are running a photography competition

The topic for the photographs are  
**“Your Animals”**

There are two categories to enter, humorous and portrait  
The best entries will be shown at Honiton Show

Please email your photos to [farm@axvets.co.uk](mailto:farm@axvets.co.uk)

Please send contact details with your photographs.  
Winners will be contacted by telephone

**Closing date for entries – Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2016**



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[www.talkaboutlaminitis.co.uk](http://www.talkaboutlaminitis.co.uk)

Contact us for further details

**EQUINE INFO**

If you would like to speak to an Equine Vet or arrange a visit, please call 01297 630515. Medicines can also be requested via email or by telephone.

Email: [equine@axvets.co.uk](mailto:equine@axvets.co.uk)