



Laminitis

Laminitis is a common condition which affects horses, ponies and donkeys. It is very painful, but with appropriate care and management, many make a full recovery.

Common myths about laminitis

- Grass causes laminitis
- I can't do anything about my horse/pony who gets laminitis
- My horse/ pony won't lose weight
- Walking a horse with laminitis will encourage blood supply to the feet

What is laminitis?

- Laminitis is inflammation of the laminae- these are supporting structures within the hooves
- Many different factors cause the disease and it is still not fully understood

Why do horses get laminitis?

- It is now recognised, that around 90% of cases of laminitis are caused by an underlying hormonal disorder- usually Cushing's disease (PPID) or EMS (equine metabolic syndrome)
- Grass alone, does not cause laminitis- it is an important trigger factor in susceptible horses
- When horses and ponies with an underlying metabolic disorder graze, it can cause an abnormally high level of insulin (a hormone) in the bloodstream
- Insulin is a vital hormone affecting glucose in the bloodstream- however high levels of insulin in the blood will cause laminitis in horses or ponies with PPID or EMS
- Very sick (toxic) horses, such as those recovering from colic surgery can get laminitis and mare's who do not pass their afterbirth within 6 hours are at risk of laminitis too.

What do I do if my horse gets laminitis?

- Phone your vet for advice- the sooner it is treated, the better the long-term outcome
- Box rest is essential- to minimise further damage within the hooves
- A deep (6") bed, preferably of shavings or sand is ideal
- Laminitis is an extremely painful condition, walking out not only increases the pain, but it can cause further problems in an already unstable foot- it can be disastrous exercising a horse with laminitis!
- Only feed hay at 1.5% bodyweight
- STOP all treats- apples, carrots, polos, molasses licks- they are full of sugar
- Your vet will advise you on what to do and treat your horse accordingly, with pain relief and hoof care
- Appropriate, early treatment is essential to prevent extensive damage to your horses feet, which can occur rapidly

How can I prevent laminitis?

- Weight management is key to preventing laminitis
- Test for underlying hormonal disorders- simple blood tests are all that are usually needed to test for Cushing's and Equine metabolic syndrome
- Talk to your vet for management ideas tailored to your individual horse
- See our feeding advice for horses at risk of laminitis