



Home Farm Equine Clinic

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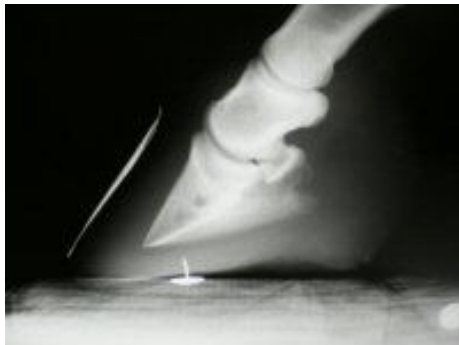
It would be nice to think that spring is on the way and we may finally be able to turn our horses and ponies out. However, with this comes the increased chance of laminitis.

Laminitis is one of the most common causes of lameness in the UK and is defined as inflammation of the laminae of the foot. These are the fragile structures that connect the hoof to the sensitive foot underneath. It is more commonly seen in the front feet but can be present in the hind feet as well.

Clinical signs include:

- Lameness
- Increased digital pulses and hot feet
- Continually shifting weight between feet
- Front feet forward and hind limbs underneath body when standing
- Heel first action when walking and worse on hard ground or when turning

Severe or chronic laminitis can eventually cause breakdown of the laminae and rotation of the pedal bone as it separates from the hoof wall. When rotation occurs, if not treated soon enough then the condition can be fatal.



Radiograph showing mild rotation of the pedal bone

Treatment of laminitis aims to relieve the pain, minimise structural changes in the foot, restore normal foot function and halt the primary disease process. This is carried out in a number of ways which will include a period of box rest with a deep bed to support the foot. Radiographs are a very important diagnostic tool in the management of laminitis as they allow us to see any rotation and determine the severity of the condition. It also allows your farrier to trim the feet and shoe accordingly so as to promote as speedy a recovery as possible.

The causes of laminitis are many and complex, but there are many different factors which we know give a higher risk of laminitis. These include:

- Pony vs horse
- Obesity- gives obesity dependant laminitis due to insulin resistance.
- Cushing's disease (due to a growth in the horse's pituitary gland)
- Complication of severe systemic illness such as septicaemia, metritis or colitis
- Trauma and stress can trigger episode
- Certain types of grass, rapidly growing or stressed grass with a high fructan level

Avoidance and treatment of some of these underlying factors will obviously reduce the risk of laminitis.

We can now offer a simple blood test which measures triglycerides, glucose and insulin for the cost of £50. Analysis of these can provide us with a more accurate prediction of your horse or pony's predisposition to laminitis. In this way we can hopefully pre-empt a problem and target the higher risk individuals with stricter management regimes or dietary changes, perhaps restricted turnout or treatment of underlying issue.

After all, prevention would be better than cure!

Tim, Campbell, Alasdair, Becky, Laura and Rhiannan