



LAMINITIS

Laminitis is a painful condition arising when the laminae that bond the hoof wall to the pedal bone becomes inflamed and in serious cases dies destroying the bond and allowing movement of the pedal bone.

SIGNS

The signs can range from mild to severe lameness and any number of feet may be affected. Usually the affected feet are warm to touch, the digital pulse is increased and the horse or pony is painful when pressure is applied to the sole especially in the toe region. In some cases the horse or pony will lean back onto their heels to take the weight off the painful toe region. Heart rate and breathing rate may be increased due to pain.

Any horse can be affected at any time of the year.

CAUSES

There are many different causes for laminitis. It is important to try to identify the “trigger factor” as removing this is essential to management of the patient. Possible causes include:

- Endocrine disease- Cushing’s disease (PPID) and Equine metabolic syndrome (EMS). Over recent years it has become increasingly apparent that the majority of horses with laminitis have underlying endocrine disease. Obesity, often linked to laminitis, may be a result of EMS.
- High intake of carbohydrates- grain overload or grass related
- Concussion- increased work on hard ground
- Endotoxaemia- Can occur secondary to colic or retained foetal membranes in a mare that has just foaled

MANAGEMENT

If you suspect your horse has laminitis you should **call your vet immediately**. If possible move your horse slowly and carefully to a near-by stable with deep bedding. If your horse is not comfortable enough to move do not force them as this may cause more damage. If you do not have a stable ensure that the horse is moved to an area with little or no grass.

Limit stress, for example, if the horse has a companion try to keep them together. This is especially important for donkeys.

Your vet will be able to advise on specific management for your horses as well as administer pain relief, take x-rays if necessary and work alongside your farrier to ensure the feet are correctly managed.



PREVENTION

Laminitis is a serious and debilitating condition that can be life threatening therefore preventing its development is preferable.

- Prevent obesity- discuss dieting with your vet
- Prevent access to feed barn
- Call your vet if you have a mare that has recently foaled so she can be checked for retained placenta
- Call your vet early for colic
- Avoid or reduce unnecessary stress
- Get your horses checked for signs of EMS and Cushing's (see separate sheet)