



RW EQUINE VET LTD

Laminitis

Laminitis is a rapidly developing condition that can occur in all horses and ponies at any time of the year. It is an inflammatory condition of the tissues that attach the pedal bone to the hoof wall inside the hoof capsule. This can be an extremely painful condition with horse's taking shortened strides, being reluctant to walk and, in severe cases, lying down more frequently to relieve the pain of weight-bearing, as well as increased heat and digital pulses in the affected feet.

Prompt diagnosis and treatment based on clinical signs is important. Foot x-rays can also help confirm the position of the pedal bone and establish a more accurate prognosis, as well as what level of supportive farriery is necessary.

There are a variety of risk factors that can increase the likelihood of Laminitis:

Sunshine makes the sugars rise,
And frosty nights with starry skies
Prevent the grass from growing taller,
So sugar levels don't get smaller.
It's not just till the frost has gone -
The risk of lami lingers on,
Till warmer nights and cloudy days
Reduce the sugars in the leys.

Sunshine makes the grass so sweet,
And ponies find it nice to eat.
But when the grass can't grow at night,
Your pony may get quite a fright
When suddenly his feet are sore,
And you can't ride him any more.
So keep him safe on sunny days -
Restrict his grass and give him hay.



Environmental factors

- Sudden growth of grass and when the grass is under stress, e.g. after a frost or overgrazing

Individual horse factors

- Being overweight
- Limb overload/concussion
- Mare's with a retained placenta
- Concurrent illness causing inflammation in the body
- An underlying endocrine condition, such as Cushing's Disease, (PPID), or Equine Metabolic Syndrome, (EMS).

These endocrine conditions can be routinely identified and managed through blood tests.

Initial veterinary treatment can include prescribing non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as Bute or Flunixin alongside other painkillers. Immediate box rest on a deep bed to limit movement is also important, as well as a foot support plan from your vet and farrier.

Management

If a horse or pony is diagnosed with EMS or PPID, they will be at increased risk of laminitis so early diagnosis is important. Once diagnosed, PPID can be managed with Pergolide medication alongside regular blood tests to monitor if the disease is being kept under control.

Ertugliflozin

Whilst EMS has previously been managed medically with either Metformin or Levothyroxine medication alongside management changes, there is now a new medication available known as Ertugliflozin. Ertugliflozin has been shown to lower insulin levels in horses and ponies, a hormone which has been shown to be significant in endocrine/hormonal laminitis disorders. A recent study has also suggested that Ertugliflozin may hasten the recovery from laminitis in EMS cases as well.



Prevention

Other preventative or helpful measures can include:

- Routine weight monitoring and farrier care
- Avoiding excessive concussion on the limbs/feet
- Support for an opposing limb in cases of severe injury to one leg.

For those who are more digitally inclined, there is now also the Laminitis Risk app that can monitor local weather conditions to predict high sugar levels in your area.