



## **LAMINITIS FACT SHEET**

### **What is laminitis?**

Laminitis is the most common cause of lameness in the UK. It is a painful condition of the feet affecting both horses and ponies which can lead to severe lameness. The sensitive tissues of the hoof (laminae) are responsible for attaching the pedal bone to the hoof capsule. Laminitis causes inflammation of these laminae which leads to weakening of the connection between the pedal bone and hoof capsule. Because of this weakened connection the pedal bone can sink or rotate towards the sole.

**Laminitis can be broadly divided into acute or chronic episodes.**

**Both of these require attention from a vet.**

### **Causes of laminitis**

Laminitis occurs when blood flow to the foot is interrupted meaning certain areas of the foot don't receive sufficient blood. This blood flow is vital to provide nutrients and oxygen to the foot. Due to the lack of blood flow, cells in the foot become damaged leading to inflammation and pain.

- **90% OF LAMINITIS CASES HAVE UNDERLYING ENDOCRINE (HORMONAL) DISEASE eg Cushing's or EMS.**

The remaining 10% are caused by

- Carbohydrate overload (eg getting into feed shed).
- Toxaemia - toxins are released in certain diseases such as colic, liver disease, diarrhoea or retained placenta after foaling.
- Concussion due to working on hard ground or surfaces.
- Excessive weight bearing on one limb - this occurs with lameness in the other limb making it unable to bear weight as normal.

## **Clinical signs**

- Laminitis can affect all four feet but most commonly the front feet
- Laminitic stance - the horse classically stands with the hindlimbs brought right underneath the body and leans back. This takes weight of the painful front feet
- Strong digital pulses
- Heat felt in the feet
- Reluctance to move
- Shifting weight between feet
- 'Pottery' gait - shortened stride, worse on hard surfaces.

## **Immediate action**

If you suspect your horse or pony is suffering with laminitis you should immediately bring them into a stable with a deep shavings bed to support the feet and call your vet. **Do not delay** calling the vet as often early treatment and management can have a significant impact on recovery.

## **Treatment**

Your vet will advise box rest with a deep bed to help with comfort and prevents the horse moving around too much. Pain relief can be administered and will help with the inflammation.

X-rays may be necessary to look for pedal bone movement within the foot. It may be necessary to shoe with remedial shoes to alleviate pressure and help prevent further pedal bone movement. Prevention of further bouts of laminitis is key to management. This can be achieved by feeding an appropriate diet, reducing grass intake and testing and treating underlying endocrine disease (such as Cushing's or EMS)

**PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US WITH ANY QUESTIONS YOU  
MAY HAVE ABOUT LAMINITIS.**

**THIS DISEASE IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY SO DO NOT DELAY  
CALLING US IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR HORSE HAS LAMINITIS.**

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