



## Equine Laminitis

***Not just the fat pony at grass - it can affect ALL horses and ponies.***

**SIGNS:** Can vary from a mild lameness, shuffling gait or looking a bit "footy", to more severe signs, such as:

Standing "rocked back" pointing front feet.

Reluctant to walk, difficult to turn.

Warm feet, bounding pulses on either side of the fetlock joints.

Sweating and blowing, maybe lying down - can look like colic.

**WHAT TO DO IMMEDIATELY:** Call us on 01905 773262

ALL cases of laminitis should be treated as an emergency - the sooner treatment can be started the better the long-term outlook.

Get the horse/pony into a stable on a deep bed of shavings. Use a trailer/horsebox if this is some distance.

DO NOT walk any further than is necessary to get the horse into the stable. If needs be, wait for the vet before moving.

### **LONGTERM**

Treatment prescribed by the vet will involve painkillers/anti-inflammatory drugs to make the horse more comfortable and reduce the inflammation in the laminae of the feet.

It will also involve a prolonged period of box rest on a deep bed of shavings. This will be for MANY WEEKS - trying to return to work too early can result in serious life-threatening damage.

Foot x-rays at the earliest opportunity will be necessary in severe cases, but even in mild cases will be important for comparisons in the future, and for the vet and farrier to make shoeing/trimming decisions.

Co-operation from your farrier will be vital - hooves may need to be specially trimmed to reduce stress on the laminae, and special supportive "heart bar" shoes may be necessary. This will involve several visits.

### **CAUSES OF PASTURE-ASSOCIATED LAMINITIS**

Obesity leads to increased susceptibility

Long toes cause mechanical stress on the laminae and increase susceptibility

Latest research indicates that fructans, complex sugars in grass are the main culprit. Levels of fructans vary with grass type, and also with temperature and light intensity, which will vary hourly throughout the day and also by season.

## **Other causes of laminitis include:**

- Feed overload
- Other illness or severe lameness
- Steroid treatment into joints or systemically
- Stress
- Metabolic diseases such as Equine Cushings disease

## **PREVENTION: better than cure**

Do not let your horse/pony get overweight.

Restrict grazing, especially in spring, not forgetting there may also be an autumn grass flush

Fructan levels in grass are highest in frosty/cool grass and on bright sunny days - turn out at night

Turn out with a muzzle on to restrict grass intake.

Avoid rye grass pastures - old meadow with a mixture of "traditional" grasses is best

Grass stores more fructans in its stem than in its leaves - stubble/grass stems left after hay cropping or pasture "topping" is much higher in fructans and more dangerous than closely grazed well managed pasture which will be more leaf than stem

## **Do not overfeed:**

Aim for low carbohydrate and high fibre, look for the Laminitis Trust approval logo.