

Equi-Ads

FREE

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Laminitis - a case study

Peter Fenton, BVM&S, MRCVS

When Minstrel came in from the field one Friday evening moving very slowly and painfully on his front legs his owner Sharon could not have anticipated how quickly and dramatically his condition would worsen. Minstrel had developed acute laminitis and was in excruciating pain when he was examined. His clinical signs (the parameters we check to assess a horse's health) were all very abnormal. The parameters give us an idea of the amount of pain a horse is in and its general health. Minstrel's heart rate was 90 beats per minute (normal is approx 40), Respiratory rate was 50 per minute (Normal is approx 12). He was not able to lift either of his front feet as it was too painful to fully bear weight on one front leg. His demeanour was depressed and the degree of pain had changed the function of his intestines so that he had passed a reduced amount of droppings and urine.

caused by metabolic changes to hormone levels in overweight horses. Obesity is a worrying, growing problem in all pets including horses. This is contributing to the increasing cases of Laminitis that we see at the Practice. This is a more frustrating phenomenon as it is totally preventable by good management employed by horse owners. It has been shown in recent clinical trials that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to cause laminitis by ingestion of carbohydrates (Grass, Haylage, etc) in a normal weight, healthy horse. Whereas a horse with a high level of insulin will be very likely to develop laminitis, obese horses will usually have a higher level of insulin.



Re-section complete

Minstrel was in a body condition 4.5 out of 5, (where 0 is very thin and 5 is morbidly obese) which was a key factor in him becoming ill. He was treated with anti inflammatory drugs and placed on

strict rest with instructions regarding his diet to reduce his weight. Minstrel's condition continued to deteriorate and he became painful in all four feet within the following week. The next stage of treatment as the Laminitis becomes a chronic condition is to x-ray the feet, alongside the Farrier and fit heart bar shoes. It is important that the surgical shoes are only fitted with the current x-rays present as they will only support the foot correctly when the position of the horse's pedal bone (Distal Phalanx) is known. These shoes are fitted on a shorter cycle than usual, so commonly 4-5 weeks instead of 6-8 weeks, this is because the support of the shoe slowly reduces as the foot grows and therefore it becomes ineffective. The x-rays showed that Minstrel had significant rotation of all four of his pedal bones; this meant that the prognosis for recovery was greatly reduced and was



Shows the extent of the separation of the hoof wall from the sole

likely to take longer if he did recover. Following the initial shoeing Minstrel started to discharge fluid from the soles of his feet and Sharon was instructed to poultice the feet to draw any pus or necrotic tissue out of the foot. At the next shoeing Minstrel needed sedating to be shod, when the Farrier removed the first shoe and started to clean the

cont. on p.32



Outlining the area to be re-sectioned

Laminitis is an intensely painful and debilitating disease which is mostly

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Watch out for laminitis



Rachel Parrott

As a mild winter rolls into a plentiful spring thoughts go to those horses that suffer most at this time of year – laminitis. Allen & Page nutritionist Rachel Parrott BSc (Hons) helps you to spot the condition and provides some prevention tips.

Signs to look for:

Laminitis tends to affect both front feet although it can affect any, or all feet at any one time.

LAMINITIS SHOULD BE TREATED AS A VETERINARY EMERGENCY.

If you observe any of the following signs of acute laminitis, call your vet immediately:

- Your horse is lame and reluctant to move, making only small, careful, 'pottery' strides. This may be more noticeable on a turn or on hard surfaces.
- Your horse may look as if he is putting his heel to the ground before his toe when he is walking.
- The 'laminitic stance' is characteristic of the condition, with the forelegs stretched forwards and weight shifted onto the heels to relieve pressure from the toes.
- Your horse may appear uncomfortable, shifting weight from one foot to another.
- In severe cases, your horse may become recumbent (lying down).
- Your horse's coronary band may be unusually warm, but this is an unreliable sign.
- You can feel a pounding digital pulse in the pastern.
- Your horse's sole is abnormally sensitive to pressure.

While waiting for the vet you can make your horse more comfortable by:

- Putting him in a stable on deep shavings, paper or sand bedding – try to avoid straw as your horse may eat it.
- Removing feed and hay, but not water.
- Allowing him to lie down if wanted.

Tips to avoid laminitis

1. Ensure your horse is a healthy weight as obese horses are at greater risk of developing the disease.
2. Limit the soluble sugars your horse consumes: molasses, cereals and lush grass can all be high in either sugar or starch.
3. Restrict grazing by either strip grazing your pasture or placing a grazing muzzle on your horse.
4. Avoid turnout on days when it is very cold but very bright and sunny as the fructan concentration will be at its highest. Wait until the temperature has risen and any frost on the grass has melted.
5. Ensure you feed a high fibre, low sugar, low starch diet. Feeds such as Fast Fibre and 'L' Mix are ideal.
6. Avoid high energy forages such as haylage. It may be an idea to soak your

hay for 12 to 16 hours also, as this will remove any soluble sugars that remain in the forage from the harvesting process.

Fast Fibre

Allen & Page's Fast Fibre is barley and molasses free making it very low in starch and sugar and suitable for horses and ponies at risk of laminitis. Fast Fibre contains quality fibre sources as well as soya oil and linseed for essential Omega 3 oils. Fast Fibre is balanced with vitamins and minerals and also contains prebiotics to help maintain a healthy balance of beneficial bacteria in the gut.

Fast Fibre RRP: £7.50 – £9.30, prices may vary depending on location.

For further information, contact our friendly nutrition team on 01362 822902, email us at helpline@allenandpage.co.uk or visit our website www.allenandpage.com

