



TAYLOR EQUINE HOSPITAL

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Laminitis

(Founder)

Laminitis, or founder, is a painful condition caused by inflammation of the laminae of the foot. The laminae connects the coffin bone to the hoof wall. Inflammation may permanently weaken the laminae and cause the hoof wall to separate from the coffin bone. Sinking of the coffin bone may occur as these connections weaken. Rotation of the coffin bone can occur due to weakness in the front of the hoof and pull of the deep digital flexor tendon on the back. Laminitis most commonly affects only the front hooves but it can affect all four hooves.

CAUSES:

The exact mechanism that causes laminitis is still under debate by researchers. Several factors have been identified to increase a horse's risk of laminitis

Risk Factors:

- Overweight horses
- Equine Cushings disease
- High nutritional level (rich hay or high grain diet)
- Large amounts of lush grass
- Ponies
- Horses that have had an episode of laminitis in the past.
- Toxin over load from various diseases



Rings in the hoof wall from chronic laminitis.

SIGNS:

- Lameness
- Heat in the hooves
- Increased digital pulses felt on the back of the fetlock area

- Shifting weight between legs
- Reluctance to move or walking very carefully
- Shifting weight to hind end and standing with front legs out in front
- Pain in the toe region with hoof testers

TREATMENT:

Call your veterinarian as soon as you notice a problem. Most horses will be placed on a medium quality grass hay. If there is an underlying cause it must be fixed. **No access to green grass or grain.** Do not pull shoes in an acute episode. The twisting on the hoof wall can make the long term outcome worse. Instead place the horse in sand or in a deeply bedded stall. This way the horse can adjust and stand comfortably or even lie down. Your horse will need anti-inflammatories, follow your veterinarian's instructions. Radiographs are often taken to evaluate how much rotation or sinking is present. These will also aid your farrier in corrective shoeing once the horse is comfortable enough to have his feet worked on. Your farrier and veterinarian should consult with one another to find the best solution for your horse. Every horse is different and so what works for one horse may not work at all for your horse. You may go through several types of shoes/pads/boots over a period of time before you find the best solution for your horse.



Many horses make a full recovery, some have chronic mild episodes and a few suffer severe or irreparable damage and are humanely euthanized. Radiographs are a good indicator of prognosis for this episode. Remember that once a horse has an episode of laminitis they are prone to more episodes. The horse's response to treatment is also a good indicator.



Prevention is the best treatment. Keep all grain secured in a tack room or shed. Introduce your horse to lush grass gradually or with a grazing muzzle, and do not put overweight horses on grass, grain or lush hay. Treat medical conditions promptly. Talk with your veterinarian right away if you suspect laminitis.



These are the stages of laminitis: mild, moderate and severe. The pink area shows the separation and inflammation of the lamina of the hoof.