

Laminitis

Definition of Laminitis: Laminitis results from the disruption (constant, intermittent or short-term) of blood flow to the sensitive and insensitive laminae. These laminae structures within the foot secure the coffin bone (the wedge-shaped bone within the foot) to the hoof wall. Inflammation often permanently weakens the laminae and interferes with the wall/bone bond. In severe cases, the bone and the hoof wall can separate. In these situations, the coffin bone may rotate within the foot, be displaced downward (“sink”) and eventually penetrate the sole. Laminitis can affect one or all feet, but is most often seen in the front feet concurrently. The terms “laminitis” and “founder” are used interchangeably. However, founder usually refers to a chronic (long-term) condition associated with rotation of the coffin bone. Whereas, acute laminitis refers to symptoms associated with a sudden initial attack, including pain and inflammation of the laminae.

Causes of Laminitis:

1. Grain overload or abrupt changes in diet
2. Sudden access to lush pasture; also known as “grass founder”
3. Toxicity within the horse’s system
4. High fever or illness
5. Severe colic
6. Retained placenta in the mare after foaling
7. Consumption of cold water by an overheated horse
8. Excessive concussion to the foot, often referred to as “road founder”
9. Excessive weight bearing on one leg due to injury of another leg or any other alteration of the normal gait

10. Various primary foot diseases
11. Bedding that contains black walnut shavings
12. Prolonged use or high doses of corticosteroids

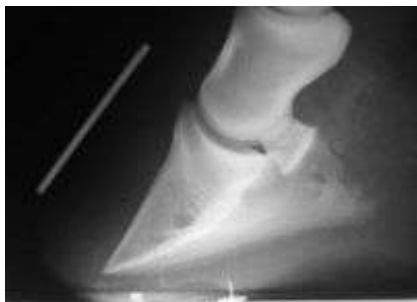
Risk Factors:

- Heavy breeds, such as draft horses
- Overweight
- Ponies
- Unrestricted grain binges
- Previous laminitic episodes

Signs

Signs of acute laminitis include the following:

- Lameness, especially when a horse is turning in circles
- Heat in the feet
- Increased digital pulse in the feet
- Pain in the toe region when pressure is applied with hoof testers
- Reluctant or hesitant gait (“walking on eggshells”)
- A “sawhorse stance” with the front feet stretched out in front to alleviate pressure on the toes and the hind feet “camped out” or positioned farther back than normal to bear more weight



Signs of chronic laminitis may include the following:

- Rings in hoof wall that become wider as they are followed from toe to heel
- Bruised soles or “stone bruises”
- Widened white line, commonly called “seedy toe,” with occurrence of seromas (blood pockets) and/or abscesses
- Dropped soles or flat feet
- Thick, “cresty” neck
- Dished hooves, which are the result of unequal rates of hoof growth. The heels grow at a faster rate than the rest of the hoof, resulting in an “Aladdin-slipper” appearance.)

Treatment: The sooner the treatment begins, the better the chance for recovery.

- Diagnosing and treating the primary problem.
- Dietary restrictions
- Stabling the horse on soft ground, such as in sand or shavings
- Opening and draining any abscesses which may develop
- Cooperation between your veterinarian and the farrier. Techniques that may be helpful include corrective trimming, frog supports and therapeutic shoes or pads.

The best way to deal with laminitis is preventing the causes under your control. Keep all grain stored securely out of the reach of horses. Introduce your horse to lush pasture gradually. Be aware that when a horse is ill, under stress or overweight, it is especially at risk. Consult your equine practitioner to formulate a good dietary plan. Provide good, routine health and hoof care. If you suspect laminitis, consider it a *medical emergency*: **Notify your veterinarian immediately.**

Information provided by American Association of Equine Practitioners

Read more about laminitis at:

www.aep.org

www.thehorse.com

www.animalhealthfoundation.com

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