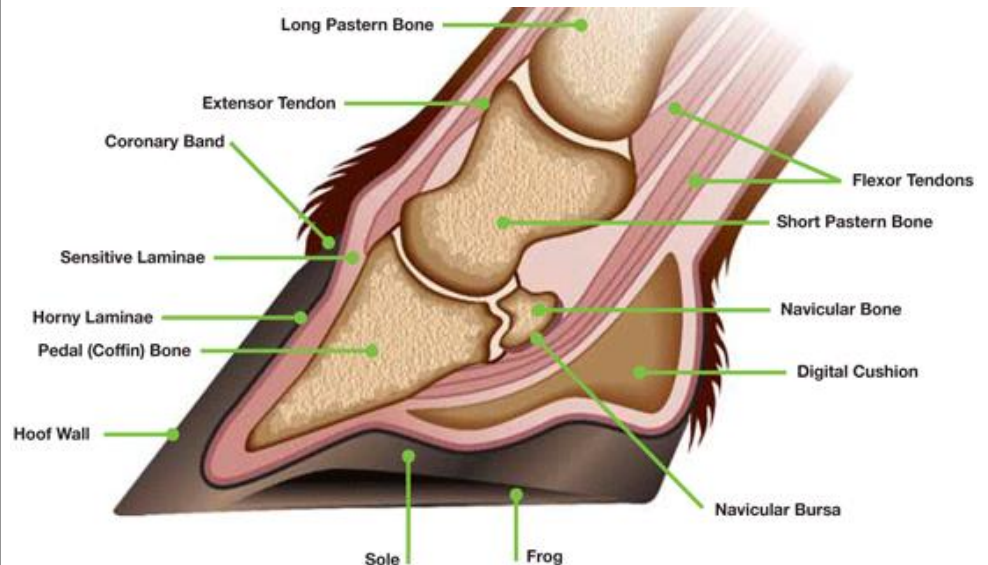


WENSUM VALLEY VETS EQUINE NEWSLETTER – MAY 2023

With the arrival of Spring and a fresh flush of grass, we enter the time of year when laminitis is a rising concern. Understandably, this can be a difficult time of year with regards to managing our horses to prevent them from becoming too fat, but in this month's newsletter we hope to increase your knowledge surrounding the condition and help you find ways to prevent the condition from occurring.

What Is Laminitis?

Laminitis is a common, painful condition of the foot that results in inflammation of the laminae that bond the hoof wall to the pedal bone. This can allow the pedal bone to rotate or sink within the hoof capsule under the weight of the horse and in extreme cases the bone can penetrate through the sole.



What Causes Laminitis:

There are three different forms of laminitis:

1. **Endocrine laminitis:** (hormone dysregulation): The most common type of laminitis (reported to be 90%) with obesity, EMS (equine metabolic syndrome) and/or PPID (Cushing's syndrome) being the most common triggers. This may manifest as excessive production of insulin in response to carbohydrate, and/or body tissue resistance to it resulting in higher levels in the blood. Through various mechanisms this leads to lamellar stretching and laminitis.
2. **Sepsis associated:** Infection resulting in sepsis, e.g. infection of the uterus (metritis) etc., trigger an inflammatory cascade that can result in laminitis.
3. **Load Bearing:** in response to lameness, where excessive weight is put onto the sound limb for long periods of time. This reduces the circulation to the foot reducing blood supply to the supporting lamellae in the foot, in turn resulting in laminitis.

CARE of the Bingeing Pony!

Grain overload is another potential cause of severe laminitis. Excessive carbohydrate allows rapid growth of bacteria in the gut, setting up an acidic environment allowing only certain bacteria to grow, killing off other healthy bacteria. This can result in a 'leaky' gut, allowing toxins produced by the bacteria to enter the bloodstream, activating an inflammatory response that can lead to laminitis.

Clinical Signs:

- Characteristic 'sawhorse' stance to take weight off their toes (laminitis particularly affects forefeet)
- Pain and resulting lameness – usually worse on hard surfaces.
- Shifting weight or lying down more
- Bounding pulses (digital pulses)
- Foot changes- divergent growth rings, long toes, widened white line (can predispose to foot abscesses).
- Heat in the foot
- Signs of concurrent conditions – e.g. long curly coat in potbellied ponies (Cushing's)



This is Teddy, a pony we have been treating for laminitis. His owner has done fantastically, changing his management to reduce his weight and his risk of recurrence.



Diagnostics:

Signs of laminitis can be very characteristic so sometimes diagnosis can be made on these alone.

Severe, sudden onset cases warrant radiography to assess the pedal bone orientation within the foot to determine treatment and guide prognosis. Radiography is also useful long term to guide therapeutic farriery and to assess severity and therefore prognosis.

Treatment:

Initial Treatment:

- **Box rest** on a deep bed of supportive bedding – e.g. shavings, woodchips/pellets, sand
- If caught in early stages, ice baths to the feet can help reduce inflammatory triggers e.g. in sepsis associated laminitis
- **Alleviate pain** – medications
- **Sole support** – some cases benefit from additional support to the soles e.g. lily pads, supportive boots etc.

Follow Up:

- Depending on severity and based on radiography
 - **Remedial farriery**
 - **Treating and removing predisposing factors** – e.g. treating Cushing's (PPID), EMS, obesity
 - **Prevention** – weight management, treat underlying conditions
 - Dietary management – removal from grass, soaked hay etc.
 - Cushing's treatment – prascend
 - EMS treatment – weight loss and exercise are the mainstays. There are now medications we can offer to aid weight loss in horses struggling to lose weight despite management changes.

The prognosis for laminitis is significantly better when prompt diagnosis and management programmes are implemented. If you have any suspicion your horse is at risk of laminitis or is starting to show signs, please contact us on 01328 864444