



WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

Laminitis...in the winter?

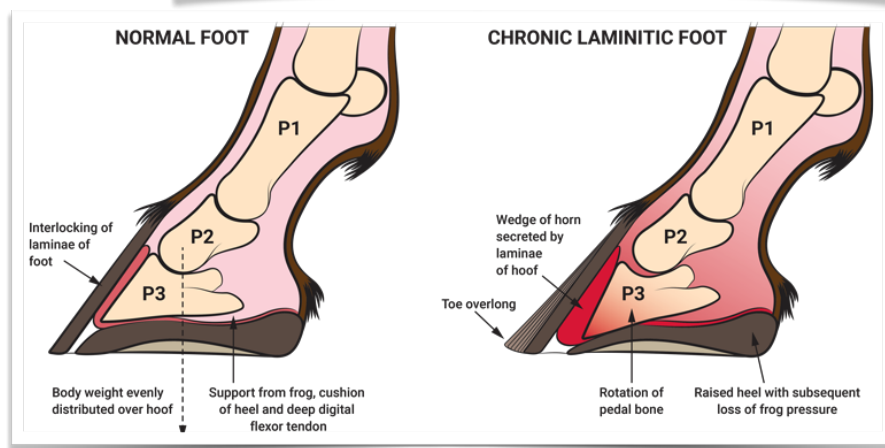
This painful, potentially life-threatening inflammation of the laminae (the tissues securing the hoof wall to the bone) is often associated with spring and summer, but is increasingly a problem all year round. It is strongly linked to excess weight and insulin dysregulation. With more horses in the UK suffering from obesity and excessive body condition than ever before, the risk of it developing even when the grass is poor, is increased. Laminitis can also be driven by untreated Equine Cushing's Disease which causes changes in the metabolism of older horses and ponies.

Weight Isn't Just About Looks

It's tempting to think of weight as a purely cosmetic concern, but in horses, excess fat is an active health risk. Fat tissue doesn't just sit quietly under the skin - it's metabolically active, producing hormones and inflammatory substances that can disrupt your horse's entire system.

"Hidden" Obesity

Not all overweight horses look obviously fat. Some store fat deep inside the abdomen and around organs - invisible from the outside but still metabolically dangerous. Regular body condition scoring (BCS) and weight monitoring on weighing scales are the only way to spot these risks early.





Untreated Equine Cushing's Disease

Left untreated, Cushing's can lead to recurrent infections, skin problems, weight changes, muscle loss, behavioural changes and more, as well as laminitis.

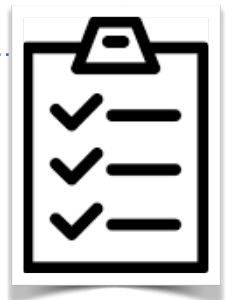
Winter Risk Factors

- Overfeeding hard feeds in large meals which can cause a rapid increase in insulin levels, especially in horses with Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)
- Overfeeding hay when it is provided due to frozen fields or increased time stabled
- Over-rugging and increased stabling slowing or preventing the nature cycle of weight loss in the winter following weight gain in the summer
- Equine Cushing's Disease can be harder to spot in the winter as

many horses are hairier, this can make their body condition and muscle mass harder to monitor

Owner Action Plan for This Month

- ★ Review your horse's BCS and weigh tape measurements from last month
- ★ Watch for subtle signs - crest thickening, fat pads appearing
- ★ Book a metabolic health test (blood tests for insulin/glucose) for overweight horses or ponies and ACTH testing (the test for Equine Cushing's) for horses or ponies over 15 years old showing signs
- ★ Consider appropriate rugging for the weather, your horse's coat and condition
- ★ Soak hay for 2-12hrs to reduce its calorific content whilst still providing filling forage
- ★ Remember: prevention is far easier (and cheaper) than treating laminitis or metabolic disease
- ★ Winter is the perfect time to start your horse's weight loss pathway, with the colder weather working to your advantage



*If you are concerned about your horse's weight or laminitis risk, we can assess their metabolic health, design a monitoring plan, and offer targeted advice. Call us on **01328 864444** to book a weight review or discuss blood testing for EMS.*



