

Laminitis



The Horse Trust

WHAT IS LAMINITIS ?

Laminitis is a special type of inflammation of the sensitive laminae of the hoof. These laminae are the equivalent of the sensitive tissue under the human finger and toe nails and this gives an idea of how very painful laminitis can be.

SIGNS OF LAMINITIS

Because of the intense pain in it's feet, the horse or pony is very reluctant to move and often lies down or stands with the hind legs tucked underneath the body to try and take some of the weight off the toes. The hooves are noticeably hot to touch and a throbbing pulse can be felt in the lower leg.



WHAT CAUSES LAMINITIS ?

Laminitis is caused by an interference with the blood supply to the foot which causes painful damage and swelling of the sensitive laminae which bond the hoof to the bone structure inside. As this band weakens the bone can twist and sink down inside the hoof and in extreme cases the bone can penetrate through the bottom of the hoof.



WHAT TRIGGERS LAMINITIS ?

There are many things that can trigger the interference with the blood supply to the foot. In the UK it is most commonly overeating carbohydrate rich food such as lush grass or cereals. It can also be caused by diseases such as infections or hormone imbalance or even concussion of the feet from excessive work on hard ground.

TREATMENT

Laminitis is a serious, life threatening disease. Early identification of the trigger and remedy of the cause is important, which usually means a strict control of the diet. Urgent medical and sometimes surgical treatment of the changes and damage to the feet is essential. This will usually require the use of anti inflammatory and pain relieving drugs. It is essential to restrict any exercise which will worsen the condition and increase the likelihood of irreversible damage. Specialist farriery attention will help relieve the pain and compensate for the permanent structural changes inside the hoof.

If you would like any further advice please contact our welfare department on 01494 488464 or email welfare@horsetrust.org.uk