



DODSON & HORRELL

ANIMAL HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WELL-BEING

FEEDING SUCCESS

LAMINITIS

All you need to know

What is laminitis?

Laminitis is an extremely painful condition effecting the laminae in the hoof. Laminae are finely structured tissues which bind together the inner hoof wall and the pedal bone. In laminitis the blood flow to the laminae is disrupted, meaning that they weaken and possibly die. If left untreated the pedal bone can become completely unsupported and can rotate within the hoof or sink through the sole. Laminitis is serious and can cause permanent damage so you should always seek veterinary advice. Once your horse and pony has had laminitis they will be more vulnerable to repeat episodes in the future.

What causes laminitis?

There have been many studies on laminitis and it is clear that there is not one single cause. It is now thought that most cases of laminitis are associated with one of three underlying disease states:

- The majority of cases of laminitis are associated with an underlying endocrine disease, commonly Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) or Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID or Cushings). Both EMS and PPID are associated with insulin resistance and high blood glucose levels (hyperinsulaemia). This is thought to effect blood flow to the laminae in the hooves, possible through Insulin Growth Factor Receptors.
- Laminitis can also be associated with sepsis or endotoxaemia and this includes grain-induced laminitis due to starch-overload and health problems such as retained placenta.
- Placing excessive weight on one limb for an extended period of time can lead to supporting limb laminitis. This is often due to lameness or pain on the other leg.



Call us now for free expert nutritional advice: **01832 737300**

FEEDING AND MANAGING THE LAMINITIC

The horse or pony prone to laminitis needs a special diet and careful management. Simply watching what you feed isn't enough on its own; you are likely to also have to make some lifestyle changes preventing laminitis is a way of life.

Feeding and managing the laminitic

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Weigh & Fat Score Regularly:

- Keeping your horse at a healthy weight for their breed and height is an essential part of minimising the risk of laminitis. We recommend fat scoring your horse and weighing them, using our scientifically validated weigh-tape, every fortnight. You should aim for a fat score of between 2.5-3 on a scale of 0-5. Pay particular attention to any regional fat deposits such as a cresty neck, fat pads behind the shoulder or fat-filled eye sockets as these could indicate increased risk of EMS.

Limit Grazing:

- Grass is a major source of calories and some horses can eat 5% of their bodyweight as grass, gaining 21kg in a week. To control the amount of grass your horse eats consider strip grazing, using a grazing muzzle, increasing the number of horses in the field or even cutting the grass every week. The risk is higher in the spring and autumn, when grass growth is most rapid, and grass is higher in non-structural carbohydrates such as sugars, starch and fructans. This may increase the risk of laminitis for individuals that are insulin resistant.

Feed Low Calorie Forage:

- Horses and ponies prone to laminitis still need plenty of forage in their diets. Restricting forage intake by too much may increase the risk of colic, gastric ulcers and oral stereotypies. Soaking hay for 12 hours in cold or 4 hours in warm water can reduce the NSC and calorie content, or alternatively mix hay with lower-calorie oat or barley straw (up to 50:50).

Feed a Suitable Concentrate Feed:

- As most horses and ponies prone to laminitis tend to

hold weight easily it is unlikely that they will need large concentrate meals, however, it is still very important that they get a balanced diet, providing all the essential vitamins and minerals for health and well-being. Consider feeding either a low calorie, fibre-based feed that is balanced in vitamins and minerals or a low intake, low calorie balancer.

Feed Small Meals:

- Laminitis due to starch-overload is very rare as most horses and ponies prone to laminitis are not fed large amounts of high starch concentrate feeds. It can occur occasionally, for example for example if a horse or pony breaks into the feed room. You should always ensure feed is kept secure and you feed small concentrate meals.

Introduce all Dietary Changes Gradually:

- We recommend you make all changes to the diet gradually; this includes the introduction of forage or pasture. Sudden changes may disrupt the fragile balance of bacteria in the horse's hind-gut which may increase the risk of colic and/or laminitis.

Exercise Daily:

- Exercise will help to aid weight loss and can help protect against insulin resistance. Horses should get a minimum of half an hour active walking per day.

Don't Over-Rug:

- If your horse has gained weight then winter can be a great time to kick start weight loss. Trace-clipping or using a lighter rug will mean that your horse will burn off some of his excess weight keeping warm.

Provide Digestive Support:

- Consider the use of probiotic and prebiotic supplements to help maintain the pH and microflora of the hindgut. Studies show that these can benefit fibre digestion and effect systemic blood inflammatory cytokines.

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