

# PREVENTING LAMINITIS & MAINTAIN HOOF HEALTH

**NET TEX**



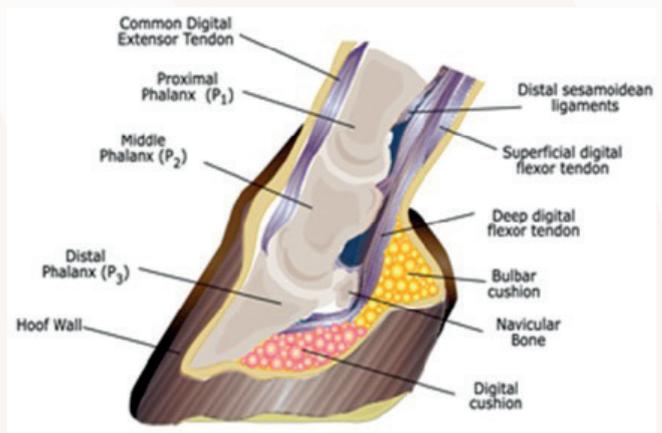
COMPLETE EQUINE CARE

**Laminitis is an extremely painful, debilitating condition that can be fatal. Traditionally it was accepted that laminitis was inevitable in certain types of pony over the spring and summer months, however this view is now outdated and the disease is in fact preventable.**

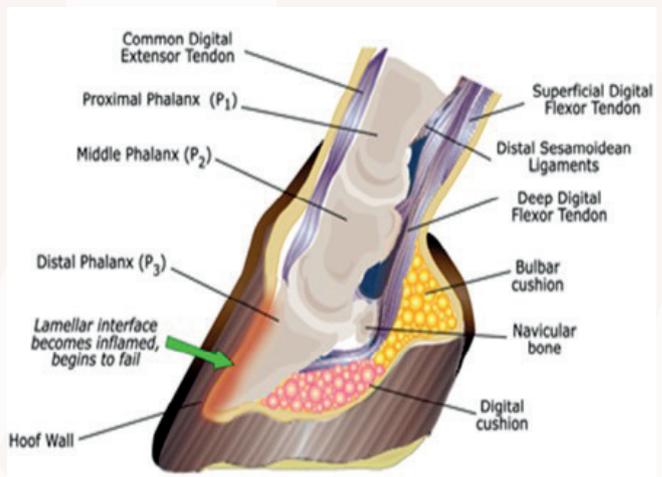
Horses showing signs of laminitis must be treated as an emergency, as chances of recovery are maximised if treatment is started early. Prevention is therefore the best option, so how do you know if your horse is at high risk of this disease?

## What is laminitis?

The laminae are “velcro-like” connections that interlock and suspend the pedal bone within the hoof. Laminitis is inflammation of these laminae causing the connections to separate and break down. In mild or early cases treated promptly the damage can be minimal and the laminae will reattach with no permanent damage. However in severe or long term cases these connections will fail and the pedal bone can rotate or sink causing lasting damage. Treatment for severe cases is not always possible if the degree of movement of the pedal bone is too severe. In the most extreme cases the pedal bone will come through the sole of the foot with fatal consequences.



The normal foot



The laminitic foot

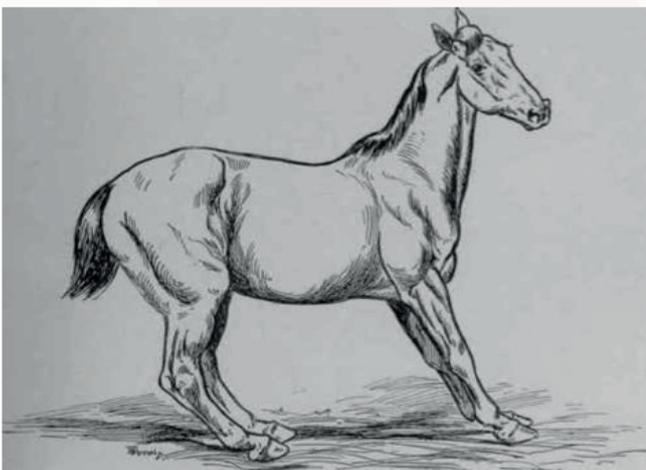
## Risk factors for pasture associated laminitis:

- Spring and summer months
- Weight gain in the previous 3 months
- New access to grass in the previous 4 weeks
- History of previous laminitis
- Lameness or foot-soreness after shoeing/trimming
- Equine Cushing's Syndrome
- Equine Metabolic Syndrome
- Obesity or regional fat deposits
- Lack of exercise or irregular exercise

## 5 warning signs to spot laminitis!

### 1. He 'feels his feet'

Mild laminitis can be confused with other sorts of lameness. Horses with mild laminitis may look 'footy' and prefer soft ground to walk on. They may have a shorter, more stilted pottery gait and be reluctant to make tight turns. These horses are also often foot-sore or lame after trimming or shoeing.



As the laminitis worsens they develop an abnormal stance, with their front legs stretched forward, while leaning backward on their heels. These horses constantly shift their weight from foot to foot to try and relieve the discomfort. They will be reluctant to pick their feet up and may be reluctant to move. If walked the horse will have a stiff gait and land heel first.

### 2. He won't move!

More severe cases will refuse to move and can be very distressed. They may be sweated up, tremble and have high breathing and heart rates due to the pain. These horses often spend long periods lying down to try to physically take the weight off their feet. Their muscles will be tense and they will look depressed. Very severe cases can be so distressed that they can be confused with colic. Horses with laminitis should never be forced to walk, unless it is to get them from pasture to their stable.

### 3. Warm feet

Inflammation of the laminae increases the blood flow to the feet, this can make them feel warm to touch, however it is not the most accurate sign as some laminitics will have cool feet.

The digital pulses will be increased. These can be felt where the horse's digital artery runs over the back of the fetlock on each side. In severe laminitis these pulses will be bounding, however in milder cases an increase can be harder to identify without practice and it is something that your vet will look for.

## 4. Pain on pressure of the sole

The tip of the pedal bone sits within the hoof above the area between the apex of the frog and toe on the sole. Severe laminitis will be painful to press this area with your fingers. Your vet will use hoof testers to identify pain in this area in milder cases. Hoof testers must only be used by a vet as damage could be caused if the pedal bone was close to the sole.



## 5. Altered foot shape

Laminitis may go unnoticed in some mild cases, or previous episodes may have happened before you purchased the horse. In these horses the feet often show characteristic changes that will tell you that the horse is at high risk of another episode.

Rings on the hoof wall that are wider at the heel than at the toe are most often seen. Dropped soles, with wider than normal white lines are also common and these horses are prone to get recurrent hoof abscesses, due to the weak horn quality.

## Five things you must do if you suspect laminitis:

### 1. Call your vet

Laminitis is a true emergency and the earlier that you can identify it and start treatment with your vet the better the chances of a full recovery. Your vet is likely to prescribe painkillers, so you should have your horse's passport present, as horses must be signed out of the human food chain to receive these drugs.

### 2. Remove the horse from grass

As soon as you suspect laminitis it is safest to remove your horse from grass and keep him stabled until your vet arrives. Try to move him as little as possible, and if he completely refuses to move then wait until your vet arrives.

### 3. Deep bedding

Once a diagnosis of laminitis is confirmed your horse will need strict box rest on a deep, non-edible bed. Ideally this should be shavings, as these will conform to the feet and allow your horse to find a comfortable position to stand. The shavings should cover the entire stable, so that wherever he stands there is a deep bed underneath. Your horse will be most comfortable if you can get the bed down immediately, before your vet arrives.

### 4. Diet

Many horses with laminitis are overweight. A diet and weight loss plan needs to be formulated with your vet, so that your horse receives enough nutrients and forage to keep him healthy, but is able to gradually lose weight.

## Get your horse tested!

Grass is the most common triggering factor for laminitis cases, but recent research has shown that up to 90% of laminitis cases are caused by underlying hormonal disease. The good news is that these diseases can be tested for and treated to prevent laminitis from starting or stop future episodes occurring.

### Equine Cushing's Syndrome (PPID)

Clinical signs are often suggestive. These include laminitis, an abnormal hair coat, abnormal fat distribution, excessive sweating, increased drinking and urination, lethargy, recurring infections and loss of muscle condition.

Diagnosis can be confirmed by a blood test where a hormone called ACTH is measured. This can be repeated to confirm that treatment is working

### Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)

Horses with EMS are insulin resistant. A fasted blood sample can show high insulin levels indicating insulin resistance, however a more sensitive test is the glucose challenge test where the horse is fasted overnight and then fed a set amount of glucose, and blood samples are taken to assess the insulin response.

Testing doesn't change the fact that being overweight, obese, or having regional fat deposits puts horses at high risk of insulin resistance, EMS and laminitis, so blood tests just confirm the cause of laminitis, or high risk of it. Again after management changes have been introduced these tests can be repeated to confirm that insulin resistance is decreasing.

## 5. Remedial farriery

Treatment of laminitis is always a team effort between you, your vet and your farrier. Hoof care is pivotal in the treatment of laminitis and your farrier will play a big role in keeping your horse comfortable and getting him on the road to recovery.

Make sure that your vet has the name and number of your farrier so they can stay in touch. Your farrier will need to see any x-rays that are taken so that he can trim and shoe your horse

accurately. Your vet may start by applying supports to your horse's feet, however your horse will need regular trimming and may require specialist shoes to support the feet and minimise further rotation. Through careful farriery, over time it is often possible to realign any rotation that has occurred.

## How can we prevent laminitis?

The key to preventing laminitis is to spot horses and ponies likely to be at risk and then make management changes to manage these risks:

### 1. Identify high risk horses and ponies

Native breeds are generally at increased risk of laminitis compared to larger horses. Unfortunately once a horse or pony has suffered an episode of laminitis they will be at increased risk for the rest of their life.

### 2. Prevent obesity by weight loss and exercise

If your horse or pony is overweight take action quickly by starting a weight loss and exercise programme which will reduce the chances of them developing this debilitating condition. Talk to your vet if you need advice on a weight loss programme for your horse.

### 3. Identify and treat predisposing conditions

If you think that your horse or pony might have Cushing's Syndrome (PPID) discuss with your vet having your horse tested. This can be done with a simple blood test and if your horse is diagnosed it can be treated with regular medication.

## Weight loss

It is important to consult your vet or a qualified equine nutritionist before starting your horse on a restricted diet to formulate a plan that is right for your horse or pony. Here are some top tips to help your horse lose weight:

- Soak hay overnight before feeding to reduce the sugar content.
- Feed hay in a double netted small-holed haynet so that it lasts as long as possible.
- Consider using a grazing muzzle if your horse is allowed pasture turnout. It will mean that they can be turned out in a larger area and so will move around more. Make sure that they are not able to get the muzzle off and are comfortable drinking wearing it before you leave it on for longer periods.
- Daily exercise (if your horse is able to). This can be walking in hand or lunging until your horse gets fitter or if your pony is too small to ride.
- Feed a sugar-free vitamin and mineral supplement with a handful of molasses-free chaff to make sure that they aren't missing out on vital nutrients in their diet. V.I.P.® In The Balance is ideal.
- Don't feed any other hard feed! It may seem mean, but their health relies on them losing weight.
- Avoid sugary treats. Look for treats that are sugar free if you want to reward your horse.
- Use a weigh tape and condition score weekly. Keep a record so that you can see your horse's progress. Take a picture on your phone each week so that you have a permanent visual record of your horse's transformation.

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## Do laminitic horses need a supplement?

Most horses and ponies that are prone to laminitis have to be kept on restricted diets. Bare pastures and old hay are often low in vitamins, minerals and trace elements. Research has shown that soaking hay also reduces the content of vitamins, minerals and trace elements. It is recommended to feed a sugar-free vitamin and mineral supplement with a handful of molasses-free chaff to make sure that they aren't missing out on vital nutrients in their diet. V.I.P.® In The Balance is ideal to feed.

Many horses that have suffered from episodes of laminitis have poor hoof quality and it is sensible to feed a supplement designed to help maintain healthy hoof growth. Choose a sugar-free supplement containing a high level of biotin, MSM, methionine, cysteine and lysine plus zinc and manganese. V.I.P.® Hoof Builder is ideal to feed.

## V.I.P.® In The Balance

Nutritional balancer with pre and probiotics to optimise gut health.

- Concentrated formula of vitamins, minerals and trace elements.
- Ideal to improve the diet of leisure and competition horses.
- Results visible within 14 days.
- Sugar free highly palatable formula.



In The Balance provides concentrated nutritional support in one easy to feed supplement. Its V.I.P. formula is designed to meet your horse's advanced nutritional needs for health, vitality and performance. In The Balance is Vet Approved and contains a concentrated package of vitamins, minerals and trace elements to improve the diet of both leisure and sport horses.

## V.I.P.® Hoof Builder

- Healthy hooves are of utmost importance when it comes to your horses wellbeing
- Poor hoof growth can lead to cracked & crumbling hooves and in severe cases cause lameness
- Feeding Nettex Hoof Builder will help maintain healthy, strong feet and help support a consistent improvement of distressed hooves.
- Biotin alone is not enough to support overall hoof health, a full package of Key nutrients is needed



## Benefits of Hoof Builder:

- **BIOTIN** - Delivering 50mg Biotin per feed. Biotin has been shown to support hoof quality in horses with poor quality hooves. At higher feeding rates biotin has been shown to improve the growth rate of hooves.
- **MSM** - Source of bioavailable sulphur, essential for hoof strength.

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- **METHIONINE, LYSINE AND CYSTEINE** - Supports sturdiness and resiliency of the hoof.
- **CALCIUM, ZINC AND MANGANESE** - Important trace elements for hoof integrity.
- **BREWER'S YEAST** - Prebiotic to support a stable gut and optimal nutrient absorption.
- **LINSEED MEAL** - Rich in Omega-3 fatty acids to maintain hoof and skin condition.
- **VITAMINS** - Comprehensive package to support hoof health.
- **VET APPROVED.**
- **SUGAR FREE** - Highly palatable formula.



## Hoof Hygiene and care are also important

- Pick feet out daily
- Check for signs of infection, damage to soles and frog especially if horses are living out
- Allow the hooves a chance to dry from consistent wet weather if possible
- Check for raised clenches that may lead to loose or lost shoes

- Regular Farriery to keep hooves in good condition
- Apply topical applications in the summer to help stop hooves from drying out – Nettex Summer Hoof Moisturiser, and in winter to help combat wet weather conditions apply Nettex Hoof Balm
- Avoid alcohol based topical products to prevent the hooves from drying out and ensure products are breathable that are applied.

