

Laminitis is an extremely painful inflammatory condition of the delicate laminae in the hoof.

In healthy hooves, these delicate (Velcro-like) tissues, bind together the inner hoof wall and the pedal bone. Laminitis affects the blood flow to these tissues causing them to weaken.

As laminitis develops, the attachment of the pedal bone to the hoof wall starts to fail, allowing the pedal bone to rotate and point towards the sole, in the worst cases, then sink right through it.

Laminitis is most common in the front feet but can affect all four.



**What are the signs?** They will be very uncomfortable often leaning back on their heels, trying to take the weight off their front feet. In severe cases, animals will be unable to move and if very severe they may lie down to take the weight off their feet completely, often, this can be mistaken for colic.

More commonly, milder case signs can include:

- Increased pulses to the feet (where the digital artery runs over the fetlock).
- Heat in the hooves.
- Pain on pressure of the sole.
- Leaning backwards to take the weight off their front feet.
- Pottery or short striding gait, weight shifting.
- Signs of abnormal hoof growth: hoof rings wider at the heel.
- Resistant to walking forwards.
- Lying down more than normal.



**What are the causes?** It has always been thought that access to lush pasture was the primary cause for laminitis.

Research has shown that 90% of laminitis cases have an underlying hormonal cause and it is this, that determines whether or not a horse will develop laminitis, when turned out onto new pasture.



There is a complex link between Equine Cushing's Disease (Pars Pituitary Intermedia Dysfunction – PPID), Equine Metabolic Syndrome and insulin resistance, three hormonal conditions that increase the risk of a horse or pony developing laminitis.

**Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)** These horses commonly have excess fat storage over their body and become insulin resistant. This condition can be diagnosed with an overnight fasting blood test after a high glucose meal and management tailored accordingly.

**Equine Cushing's Disease** Seen more often in older horses and ponies, although not exclusively. It is due to an enlargement of the pituitary gland at the base of the brain. This causes high levels of circulating ACTH and other hormones that can lead to laminitis. Other signs of Cushing's include an abnormal hair coat and delayed shedding, abnormal fat redistribution, patchy sweating, increased drinking and urination, lethargy and recurrent infections. This is diagnosed by a simple blood test. If we download a voucher, having provided your details to the Care About Cushings Website (<https://www.careaboutcushings.co.uk/>), will receive the first lab tests free of charge and be given some useful information on Cushing's.



**What should I do if I suspect my horse has laminitis?** Sudden onset Laminitis is **urgent**. Prompt attention and treatment as soon as the signs are recognised are important to help alleviate pain and reduce any long-term damage. It is important to seek veterinary attention. While waiting for the vet, remove from a pasture, provide deep bedding and ensure they can reach food (soaked hay) and water. As previously mentioned 90% of laminitis cases are caused by hormonal conditions so it is important that these are tested for.



**How can we treat it?** Emergency treatment includes pain relief, restricting movement and supporting the foot to reduce the risk of pedal bone movement. Longer term treatment will address the painful symptoms and possibly include changes to farriery and management. Often x-rays of your horses feet can be helpful to assess the extent of the problem and enable the farrier to make any necessary corrections. It is also important to treat the underlying cause of the laminitis not just the signs themselves.

**How can we prevent it?** It is really important to remember that laminitis is a multi-factorial problem. It is important to identify any underlying conditions, including being overweight, to ensure horses and ponies can be managed appropriately to reduce the risks of further episodes of laminitis.

Please do talk to us about our Cushing's Club to sign up for cheaper medication and ACTH tests, if your equine does have Cushings'.

**If you have any questions about laminitis please ring us on 01297304007**

Please also take a look at our Summerleaze Vets YouTube link ([ps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MD6OIVAsLk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MD6OIVAsLk)) where we explain how to feel digital pulses.

**How proud are we!** Not only has the practice been announced as a nominee for 'Practice of the Year', but also two Summerleaze Vets are in the running for 'Vet of the Year'. **Thank you** to all those who have nominated our vets and the practice, it really does mean a lot.

We would also like to celebrate and congratulate Tessa Porter, who has clocked up 35 years in veterinary practice, a legend in her own lifetime!

