

Treating laminitis in horses using homeopathy and acupuncture by Dr. John Fudens HMC DVM PH

Laminitis (founder) is a disease that affects the feet most commonly in horses and cattle. Clinical signs include foot tenderness progressing to inability to walk, increased digital pulses, and increased temperature in the hooves. The horses (typically in the beginning) are anxious, apprehensive, acting fearful, tense and more. They are in pain, reluctant to eat or drink, sweat, tremble, pupils dilated, nostrils flare, lay down often and more. Not all these signs are seen together but you will see some of them at least.

Structure

The bones of the hoof are suspended within the hooves by layers of modified skin cells, known as laminae or lamellae, which act as shock absorbers during locomotion. In horses there are primary and secondary laminae. The fact that these animals run, jump and all their activity is supported by the interaction of these tissues is amazing. Certainly considering the weight of horses which can be over a ton in the giants.

Laminitis literally means inflammation of the laminae and this inflammation causes the two types of laminae to swell and start a separation. Forces (from the animal's weight and movement) placed on the hoof are then strong enough to tear the two laminae resulting in a failure between the hoof wall, the two laminae and coffin bone. When severe enough, this results in displacement of the coffin bone within the hoof wall.

Most cases of laminitis occur in both front feet, but may be seen in all four feet, both hind feet or in a single foot. The two main concerns with this condition is the rotation and displacement of the coffin bone.

To define the pathology of laminitis anything that causes inflammatory cells and increased blood volume coming into the tight confined space of the hoof can cause the two laminae to swell and separate. This then disrupts the coffin bone from the hoof wall which then leads to rotation and displacement.

Causes

There are many possible causes for the inflammation and not always can one be found. Here are some possible causes.

Inflammatory issues include sepsis, endotoxemia, retained placenta, excessive carbohydrates from feeding too much grain, sweet feed, early lush pasture grass, etc.. Basically any inflammation that brings an increase in blood flow to the hoof.

Endocrinopathy

Endocrine dysfunction of improper insulin regulation, equine Cushing's syndrome, equine metabolic syndrome, obesity and steroids.

Trauma

Any injury to the horse creating inflammation either whole body, legs, feet can cause the blood to flow to the hoof with the inflamed cells.

In my experience there are two basic types. Acute and chronic. I have seen and treated both.

Acute tends to be the easier and a better form to treat in my view. My approach is as follows. I first give the horse homeopathic Aconitum Napellus (Monkshood) 200c or 1 M 3 pellets every half hour depending on the state of the horse. I may give 2-4 doses depending on how the horse responds and settles down. While I am using Aconitum I am checking the Bladder meridian's acupuncture points. This meridian has 2 energy lines running parallel to the vertebrae on each side. I will not go into great detail about acupuncture in this article. Of all the acupuncture meridian and points in both the human and animal body the reason I use the Bladder points is because that is where I commonly find more of the trigger points indicting whatever is going wrong with the body and its systems. I started my holistic journey in 1972 by studying and training in acupuncture but after becoming a classical homeopathy I only do acupuncture on the horse.

If I find any point on the meridian reactive I use a 20 gauge 1-1 ½ needle to inject 10cc of crystalline B 12 1000mcg into the point. In the acute state I will find such points. Between the Aconitum and the release of endorphins from injecting the points the horse will usually settle down, eyelids start to droop, head dipping, overall body tension releasing and giving the appearance of going to sleep. Even when I use acupuncture without Aconitum I will see the horse relax and calm down.

Once I finish giving Aconitum and using acupuncture I start the horse on homeopathic Belladonna (nightshade) 200c or 1M 3 pellets every hour. Because this is acute and a very serious condition in horses I push the potency of the remedies and the frequency hard to give relief.

While I am giving the Belladonna I check the coronary band of the affected leg (s). Usually I will see both front feet involved, rarely 1 or the rear feet. I will find one or more swellings at the band indicating the acute buildup of blood in the hoof. I then take a razor blade or sharp knife and nick each soft hot spot to get bleeding to occur. This is not serious hemorrhaging as I am only drawing out the stagnant hot blood that will cause the primary and sensitive laminae to rotate if

left there. The bleeding will stop by itself once the pressure is released. Of course each step of the way I am telling the owner exactly what I am doing and why. Otherwise I have learned I can get panicky owners.

I will make any other changes as needed like making sure the shoes are removed, no hoof trimming for the time being, restricting the food (no grain, alfalfa, high protein and other treats), and certainly no vet medicine with the drugs. One of the best therapies, if I can get the owners to do this, is to have them put the feet in buckets of cold or ice water. There is nothing like cold to reduce the heat, pain and inflammation. Surprisingly most horses tolerate the cold water once they learn the feet feel better. I then give the owner Belladonna pellets with instructions on how often to give the remedy. I will revisit the horse in no more than 3-4 days. As long as the owner cooperates I will stay with acupuncture as needed, Belladonna (changing remedy, potency and frequency as needed depending on how the horse responds), cold soaks and restricted diet for as long as needed. I get very good results with this program but unfortunately some horses will have the pedal bone (P3) start to rotate.

Chronic laminitis unfortunately is the more common condition I have been called on to treat. This occurs because owners and vets do not know how to treat this condition in any way other than conventional medicine and many such treatments have been attempted. So when I see these horses they are usually walking on their heels, all sorts of hoof trimming and shoes are being used, the hoofs are malformed, the horse barely able to walk, weight loss from not eating well, the owner not able to use the horse as intended, lots of \$ has been spent, the coffin bone (P3) has perforated the bottom of the hoof which can lead to infection and euthanasia is in the future.

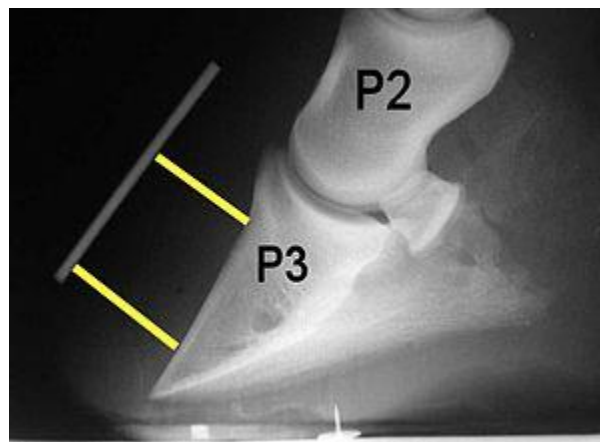
These poor horses are in a terrible state. The horse is suffering and the owners usually at wits end as to what to do further.

I make sure the hoof is being trimmed properly. I do not use shoes with my horses and strongly try to get owners to do the same. Mother nature did not create horses to have metal on their feet or in their mouths. There are good and bad in all classes of people. I have seen some fine farriers who know what they are doing and trim to help the horse as best they can. But I have also seen some with an ego issue that think they are better than vets or anyone else and their way is the only way. So with this issue handled I look to see if there are any wounds or openings in the hoof, sole, frog, sulcus. If so I will inject, pack or have the owner soak the hoof in calendula oil or aqueous solution. Calendula is made from the Marigold flowers and is a beautiful healing agent, antiseptic, antiinflammation and much more. Have used it in humans and animals for many years and conditions. Even have it in homeopathic form.

I will check the acupuncture points and if indicated will inject like in acute. Depending on the condition of the hoof and the quality and quantity of damage i. e. rotation and displacement of P3, the hoof malformation and degree of laminae separation I have a number of remedies of have used.

If infections I will use homoeopathic Calendula, Silica, Hepar sulphuris, Ginkgo biloba. Which one depends on the situation. If not I will look at Sulfa, Ledum, Calcarea carbonica, Mezereum, Calcarea fluorica and others. Sorry I cannot be more specific but I am evaluating individual horses which is what homoeopathy is all about.

Treating chronic laminitis is a long term approach. Many months and maybe longer. Unfortunately some horses can never be recovered 100% and then unless euthanasia is done they become pasture pets. I know there are many various treatment protocols in treating this condition. This article details my experiences.



Radiograph of a horse hoof showing rotation of the coffin bone and evidence of sinking, a condition often associated with laminitis. The annotation P2 stands for the middle phalanx, or pastern bone, and P3 denotes the distal phalanx, or coffin bone. The yellow lines mark the distance between the top and bottom part of the coffin bone relative to the hoof wall, showing the distal (bottom) of the coffin bone is rotated away from the hoof wall.



Hoof sagittal section with massive inflammation and rotation of third phalanx.