



# How to Avoid Laminitis

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- Do not permit unlimited grazing of lush grass. Fertilised grass is particularly dangerous. Spring is the highest risk time of the year as rapidly growing grass contains high concentrations of carbohydrate. But be wary if a spell of rain brings on a fresh crop of new grass following a prolonged dry spell; the laminitis Clinic is busiest in Autumn.
- If you think your horse is at risk, fit a Stubb's muzzle with a hole cut in the bottom or a Greengurad muzzle to permit grazing whilst restricting intake.
- Excess carbohydrate from other sources can also trigger an attack. Be aware of what your mix or cubes contain. A high-fibre feed, preferably one which carries the Laminitis Trust Approved Mark, is much healthier than a high energy starchy feed.
- Horses should never be overweight. As a guide, you shouldn't be able to see the horse's ribs, but you should certainly be able to feel them easily. Feed according to work. Hacking isn't hard work.
- Don't be encouraged to overfeed to satisfy showing judges or even your peers. Feeding to achieve 'show ring condition' is simply not healthy.
- Be aware toxins from poisonous plants or laylandii trees, or from grazing fields recently sprayed with pesticides can cause laminitis.
- Stress or traumas can be a trigger – show jumpers competing on hard ground, racehorses on firm going, and unfit endurance horses have all incurred attacks of laminitis.
- A common trigger is a pituitary tumour, the signs of which are failure to shed the winter coat, excessive drinking and sweating, and swelling above the eyes.

### Symptoms:

- Laminitis can vary from a mild lameness affecting one or more feet, to the animal lying sweating and groaning – often giving rise to the misdiagnosis of colic or azoturia.
- In its mildest form, the horse or pony may not move as freely as normal. The condition sometimes goes unrecognised as owners think it is just bruising. In severe cases the animal will lie down to relieve the pain in its feet.
- Most animals will stand on the heels to relieve the pain by taking weight off the sole and the toes. They tend to shift weight from one foot to the other.
- You can detect an attack by feeling a stronger than normal pulse in the digital arteries at the back and the sides of the fetlock. Heat in the feet is very inconsistent and should not be used to diagnose laminitis.
- If laminitis has progressed to Acute Flounder, there is a depression present around the front part of the coronary band.
- If it has progressed to the stage of a Sinker, the depression extends all the way around the coronary band right back to both heels. The horse has at best a 20% chance of survival.

### What to do:

- Remove the horse from the cause of the attack. Treat laminitis with the same urgency as colic. Call your vet.

- Get the horse onto a deep shavings bed in his stable. Trailer him home if it involves a long walk. He needs absolute box rest.
- Your vet will prescribe a pain killer, tranquillizer and fit a frog support. Do not expect his shoes to be removed. If the sole is flat or convex he will be likely to be more lame as he will have to stand on his soles. Shoes should only be removed if the sole is concave.
- Do not starve the horse as this could cause hyperlypaemia which is often fatal. Diet the horse by using forage and high fibre/low starch chopped feeds. Look for the Laminitis Trust Approved Mark on feed sacks.
- Do not exercise him. Drugs are the only effective means of improving perfusion of the laminae. Exercise will only cause more pain and increase the chances of floundering.
- Don't get involved in cold hosing, hot poulticing or standing the horse in streams.
- If the horse hasn't improved in 2 days with these treatments, reassess the case and have x-rays taken.
- For more information on [www.equilife.co.uk/laminitis-org](http://www.equilife.co.uk/laminitis-org).
- Laminitis Clinic Helpline – 0870 444 0676

