

Inside:

- Controlling Rain Rot
- Considerations for an Effective Teeth Floating Program

Arkansas 4-H Horse Program Adds Ranch Horse Division at 4-H State Horse Show

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

In 2013 the Arkansas 4-H Horse Program will add the Ranch Horse Division to its lineup of classes. The classes within this division are:

- Halter
- Ranch Trail
- Ranch Pleasure
- Reining
- Ranch Cutting

The purpose of the Ranch Horse Division is to showcase what a working

ranch horse would do on a day-to-day basis on the ranch. It also offers something a little different for youth who are looking to be involved in showing horses in 4-H. With growing popularity across the country, the Ranch Horse Division is a natural fit. Clinics will be conducted across the state in an effort to demonstrate what constitutes a working ranch horse and what the class format will be.

Preventing Laminitis or Founder During Changing Seasons

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

As we approach the colder part of the year, one of two things is probably happening with most horse-feeding programs in Arkansas. Either you are looking for hay to purchase (many have already purchased their hay for the year) or you planted some winter grasses that are good for grazing during winter months, typically rye, ryegrass and oats. While winter grazing on these grasses is highly recommended and a proven viable option, a major factor to take into consideration is the prevalence of carbohydrates in these grasses. For those horse owners who are foregoing winter grazing and feeding hay, it is equally important to consider the added carbohydrates in unfamiliar “horse quality” hay as well. With the overabundance of carbohydrates comes the possibility of laminitis or, as it is also known, founder.

We hear a lot about laminitis or founder but rarely do we understand what’s going on when it happens. As with any health issue or unexpected turn from normalcy with our horses, the most important thing you can do is to contact your veterinarian. Your veterinarian knows your horses almost as well as you do.

What is laminitis?

According to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), laminitis is a specific condition of the foot that can produce lameness. Laminitis is characterized by inflammation and destruction of the cellular bond between the sensitive and insensitive laminae of the hoof. These structures normally attach the hoof wall to the coffin bone. In horses with laminitis, the attachment of the hoof wall to the coffin bone is compromised

and rotation or sinking of the coffin bone within the hoof capsule can occur. In simpler terms, founder itself is where the coffin bone can no longer remain attached or held secure in its proper position.



How does what we feed a horse have an affect on horses' feet?

Tom Inczewski, a well-known farrier who specializes in hoof care and laminitis, states that laminitis is often associated with carbohydrate overload in the form of high-sugar feeds, too much feed and/or access to pasture high in soluble carbohydrates. These carbohydrates are readily broken down by the bacteria in the horse's large intestine. One of the consequences of rapid breakdown of these carbohydrates is production of a substance that, when absorbed into the bloodstream, can damage an important structure in the hoof – the basement membrane. It should also be noted that not all horses will develop laminitis when they're

As Arkansas approaches a more wet time of year (at least we hope), one of the major considerations for horses housed outside is the potential of developing rain rot, aka dermatophilosis. It is also known as rain scald or mud fever. It doesn't have to just be a fall or winter condition but can also be seen (although with less frequency) during the

exposed to potential triggers, such as too much starch/sugar. Those that do are most likely metabolically susceptible to the disease.

What does it look like?

Affected horses are usually reluctant to move and resist attempts to lift their feet. The condition is usually worse in the front feet, resulting in a peculiar stance. Horses lean back to transfer weight off the front feet and onto the hind feet. The feet are typically warm and have bounding digital pulses. A horse with laminitis might also develop visible rings in the hoof wall and might also experience a change of hoof angle if the coffin bone rotates or sinks. Laminitis can strike one foot or all four.



What can we do to prevent it?

- Limit grazing on pasture that has been planted with winter grazing type grasses until grass is mature.
- Have hay tested for soluble sugar levels.

Controlling Rain Rot

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spring. Dr. Anthony Yu, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVD of Ontario Veterinary College, states:

The *Dermatophilus* organism needs moisture to proliferate, release, and spread the infective forms of the bacteria, called zoospores. Horses might become infected from direct

- Soak hay in water if heavy in soluble sugars.
- Turn horses out early in the morning and only for a brief time. If limited grazing is not an option, purchase a grazing mask to limit amount of intake.
- Keep your horse's weight in check (overweight horses are more susceptible to metabolic problems).

What treatment is available?

Minimizing mechanical trauma within the foot via trimming/shoeing is the cornerstone of treatment and ongoing management. Pain management is also an integral part of the healing process. Your veterinarian and/or farrier will help create the best treatment plan for your horse.

The majority of laminitis cases can be prevented with a sound grazing management plan. Planting winter grasses in preparation for winter grazing is a viable option when designing a plan for your horse's nutrition. High-quality "horse hay" is also an important part of nutrition management. Keep in mind that horses that have foundered before are more susceptible to experiencing it again. Understanding the causes and the health history of the horse will go a long way in prevention.

contact with contaminated fomites (inanimate objects or substances capable of carrying infectious organisms; for example, the bacterium can survive dormant in bits of fallen-off scab for months) or an asymptomatic carrier, or indirectly through transmission by insects.

In simpler terms, the disease can be spread through insects and can also be spread from horse to horse. There have also been some cases where rain rot was found in dirt the horse had rolled in.

Rain rot can mostly be seen along the back of a horse – from neck to croup. It can also be seen on the legs. It appears that the condition itself doesn't cause pain. However, if contact is made with the affected skin or the scabs are picked off, there may be some discomfort and/or pain for the horse. There are various medications available to treat the condition. Most feed stores or co-ops will have the necessary treatment. Listerine® has also been said to have a positive effect on rain rot. It can be treated like a fungus, thus many disinfectants will do the job. Ensure the area is dry

once treatment is applied as well. There are also times when it goes away on its own. If skin becomes infected and doesn't appear to be healing properly, call your veterinarian to determine the best plan of action.

What does it look like?

- Scab-type lesions
- Loss of hair
- Raised tufts of serum-matted hair
- Red or irritated areas under hair



Tips to keep it from spreading

- Don't share tack, equipment or blankets between horses you suspect may have rain rot.
- Keep infected horses isolated.
- Minimize exposure to bacteria and bugs.
- After treating the infected horse, wash hands thoroughly.
- Have a covered area for your horses.
- Keep coat clean – especially for horses turned out more than others.

Considerations for an Effective Teeth Floating Program

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

Imagine sharp points on your teeth that rub your mouth or cheeks while you chew your meals. Considering that horses' teeth continue to grow as they age, this is an expected occurrence when they attempt to eat grain or simply graze in the pasture. Adding to the problem, a horse will chew in an unnatural manner and consequently cause damage to other teeth and parts of the mouth while attempting to relieve some of the pain.

Your horse should have a dental examination twice each year to determine if his or her teeth need floating, especially horses less than 10 years old. These examinations should begin as early as possible for foals. Floating a horse's teeth is defined as using a rasp (both by hand and power tools) to file down the rough edges on a horse's teeth. The filing doesn't hurt (no nerves there) and makes chewing much easier and more comfortable.

Many horses can go a few years without floating, but there are also many that require floating once or twice a year. It is a good rule of thumb to get teeth checked while conducting early spring vaccinations and again in the fall when preparing for fall care of your horse. Please see photos for an example of teeth going too long without a floating.

A thorough dental plan can extend the life of your horse greatly and will allow his or her behavior to be much more pleasant and predictable.

Some symptoms that a horse may need his or her teeth floated include:

- Difficulty chewing (accompanied by ears pinning and tail swishing)
- Reluctance to drink cold water
- Quidding (dropping food while eating)



- Excessive unchewed grain in manure
- Constipation colics
- Weight loss
- Swelling or tenderness in jaw area
- Reluctance to accept a bit (raises head high while bridling)
- Throwing head while riding
- Throwing head while stopping
- Reluctance to turn a certain direction while riding
- Excessive slobbering
- Turning their heads to the side when they chew
- Snotty nose from only one nostril
- Foul odor from mouth or nostrils

Source: Dr. Rick Parker,
Oklahoma State University
Veterinary Teaching Hospital