

Middle California Region USPC

Blemishes & Unsoundnesses

Study Guide

Front Leg Problems

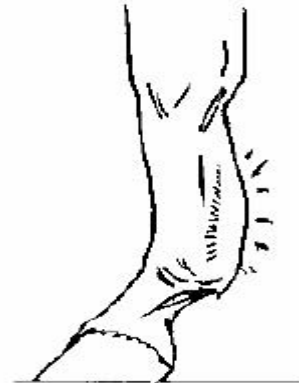
Splint

Splints are hard lumps appearing between the splint bones and the cannon bones. The splint bones are attached to the cannon bone by a small ligament. When the splint bone becomes injured (by being struck) or carries more than its share of weight (often caused by bench knees), this ligament becomes sore. It heals by building up a calcium deposit. This new bone growth – called exostosis – welds the splint bone to the cannon bone. A splint is usually hot and painful when it first appears. With rest, it becomes quiet. And usually does not cause lameness. If allowed to heal completely, a splint will appear as a hard lump on the inner leg. The horse will be sound but the lump will remain as a blemish. Splints are usually seen in young horses just starting to do hard work. Carrying heavy weight, striking one leg against the other, making tight circles, jumping and working on hard ground all lead to splints – especially in horses under 5 years of age.



Bowed Tendon

Bowed tendon is a result of a tendon stretched too far and torn, often because of an accident. Tendon fibers are torn, causing pain, heat and swelling. Later, scar tissue forms, creating a thickening or "bow", in the tendon. May be high or low on the tendon, causing severe lameness. The horse may recover, but the tendon will never regain full strength. Calf knees, long sloping pasterns, long toes and low heels, and weak: "tied-in" tendons put more strain on the tendons and may contribute to bowed tendons. However, any horse can bow a tendon through an accident or a fall. When a bowed tendon first happens, it is extremely painful and the horse will be lame. After it heals, the horse may not be lame, but the leg may never be quite as strong as before.



Foot & Pastern Problems

Navicular Disease

Navicular disease is a problem deep within the foot. The deep flexor tendon passes under the navicular bone and fastens to the underside of the coffin bone. The navicular bursa is a pad that protects the bone where the tendon crosses over it. The deep flexor tendon presses against the navicular bone and the navicular bursa with every step. Navicular disease occurs when the navicular bursa, the navicular bone or the end of the tendon becomes inflamed and sore. It usually starts out as a mild lameness that comes and goes. Later as the bone and tendon become inflamed and roughened, the lameness may become severe and the horse may be lame all the time. Because the heels hurt, the horse tries to walk on his toes, which gives him a short, "tiptoe" gait and may make him stumble. Navicular disease is more common in middle-aged horses whose conformation promotes concussion. Small feet, narrow heels, upright pasterns and long toes with low heels all can contribute to navicular.

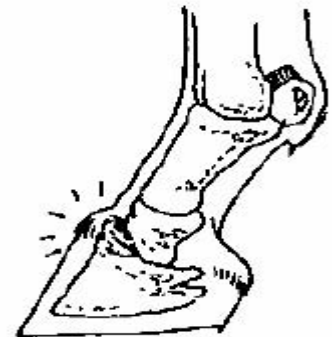
High Ringbone

Arthritis (calcification and inflammation) in the joint between the two pastern bones. Eventually the bones may fuse or grow together, and the horse may become sound, but high ringbone has the danger of developing into low ringbone, which is more serious. Too much concussion contributes to ringbone: it is more common in horses with upright pasterns. It may also occur in horses that carry extra weight on one side of the foot and leg because of crooked legs.



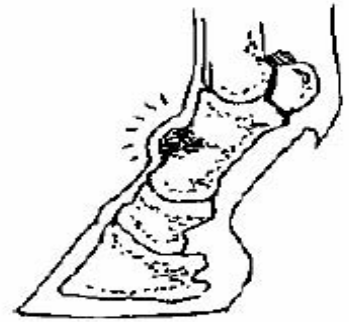
Low Ringbone

Low ringbone occurs between the end of the pastern bone and the coffin bone, inside the hoof. This type of ringbone is usually, more serious, and the horse becomes permanently lame. Too much concussion contributes to ringbone: it is more common in horses with upright pasterns. It may also occur in horses that carry extra weight on one side of the foot and leg because of crooked legs.



Non-articular Ringbone

A calcium deposit, or exostosis, located in the pastern area, away from the joints. This is the least serious type of ringbone and the horse may be sound after a period of rest. Caused by stress and concussion. Too much concussion contributes to ringbone: it is more common in horses with upright pasterns. It may also occur in horses that carry extra weight on one side of the foot and leg because of crooked legs.



Sidebone

The collateral cartilages of the coffin bones, which form the bulb of the heel, gradually calcify and turn to bone. This usually is not considered an unsoundness unless the sidebones become very large or get broken, causing lameness. Most common in large, heavy horses with big feet, especially if they have straight pasterns that cause more concussion.



Hind Leg Problems

Curb

A sprain in the plantar ligament, running down the back of the hock, caused by extra strain on the hock, resulting in a thickening at the lower end of the hock joint. It usually causes lameness. Curbs are often associated with sickle hocks or horses that "stand under" in the hind legs. This makes the hock weak and puts more strain on the ligament.



Bog Spavin

It is a soft swelling on the front of the hock, caused by a buildup of synovial fluid from the joint. This indicates that the hock has been under extra stress, but not enough to make him lame. A bog is considered a blemish, but should be taken as a warning sign. Bog spavins are often seen on horses with straight hocks, or when horses with weak hock conformation do work that is hard on their hocks.



Bone Spavin

Bone spavin is arthritis in the small bones of the hock, caused by too much stress or concussion. When irritated by stress or concussion, they form "bone spurs" on the edges of the bone. These are painful and cause lameness. The lower bones of the hock fit closely together like saucers stacked on top of one another: there is not much movement between them. If the calcium deposits cause the bones to fuse together, the horse may recover fully; if not, he may be lame. Bone Spavin appears as a hard swelling low on the inner hock. Bone spavin is more common in horses that put extra strain on their hocks. Cow hocks, bowed hocks and very straight hocks are more prone to developing bone spavins.



Thoroughpin

A thoroughpin is usually caused by stress or strain on a weak hock, especially sickle hocks. It is a soft, cool swelling in the upper part of the hock, caused by an excess of tendon sheath fluid. Like a bog spavin, a thoroughpin is considered a blemish and usually does not cause lameness.

