

Cushing's Disease

Are you worried about your horse or pony this winter? Does he/she have laminitis that won't seem to respond to treatment? Do they keep getting infections or abscesses? Do they seem to hang on to their hairy, winter coat all summer? They could be suffering from a common condition of older equid's called Cushing's.

Cushing's is a disease we are encountering with increasing frequency. This is partly due to ponies and horses living longer as they are being kept as companions rather than just athletes. Cushing's commonly develops in late teens to early twenties and is more common in ponies than in horses.

One of the main signs is chronic laminitis, although sometimes the only obvious sign is very hairy, sweaty coat. Occasionally owners notice that their horse is drinking more than normal, and sometimes they may notice a change in body shape (for example, bulging of the fat pads above their eyes).

Cushing's is the result of over production of naturally occurring steroid by the horse's body. There are some simple tests that can be done. One involves taking a paired blood sample on consecutive days, after a steroid injection. There is a very small risk, especially in a horse already suffering from laminitis, that the steroid injection may exacerbate laminitis. An alternative test involves sending one blood sample to a laboratory to detect changes in a hormone, ACTH.

Once diagnosed, treatment is a lifelong commitment. Prascend (pergolide) is the most commonly used medication.

If you have any concerns about Cushing's disease in your animal, please book a visit or feel free to call us, and any of the equine team will be happy to talk to you and offer help and FREE advice.

For a limited time vouchers to help with the costs of diagnosing your horse can be downloaded from www.talkaboutcushings.co.uk