

Symptoms

"Many cases are mistaken for lameness higher up in the limb, like in the shoulder. Sometimes owners believe the lameness is in the hind leg, when actually the horses are just trying to get off their front limbs. It's important for people to know that 80% of all lameness is actually in the foot," explains Shawn Samuelson, DMV. "I strongly encourage people to contact an AFA Certified Professional to make sure they get the correct diagnosis."

Signs to watch for include fever or heat in hooves, pulse of the distal artery, a "parking out" stance, weight shifting from foot to foot, stiffness—especially in front legs, and a fatty neck crest (chronic cases).

My horse has laminitis; now what?

Before the professionals arrive, owners can start by removing the source of the problem - get them off the grass, grain, or whatever the cause that created the problem. The sooner laminitis is addressed, the better the outcome can be.

"To begin with, we address pain management, and then support the foot to minimize rotation. We also educate owners so they understand why laminitis is so painful," says Samuelson.

Know there is no cure. The symptoms may subside, but laminitis is a permanent condition. According to Miles, "Once the horse has had laminitis, something changes in their system. This change will then always make that horse prone to developing laminitis flare-ups."

Johnson adds, "Certainly after a horse has foundered once, it might be dangerous to feed that same horse further grain. It will be at increased risk for repeated founder. Plus owners need to understand why it foundered in the first place. Too much grain? Genetic susceptibility in that individual?"

Be prepared for a little trial and error, since you will soon learn the vast range of opinions you will have to consider when it comes to treating your horse. Part of the vast range of options is due to debates among circles of professionals and because not all horses respond to the same treatment.



Burros with overgrown hooves, a condition that could easily lead to laminitis and/or founder. They eventually benefited from owner educational assistance, via the IERAL (Iowa Equine Rescue & Awareness League)
Photos compliments of IERAL's educational awareness

While there may be some "trial and error" with laminitis, it is not a "wait and see" kind of disease. It is progressive and very detrimental to your horse's well being. Today is the best day to start being cautious of the frequency and severity of laminitis cases - and there's no debate about that.

