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Curb (Plantar Ligament Desmitis)

Definition

A Curb is a well-defined fibrous swelling (desmitis) on the proximal planter aspect of the hock usually seen 3.5 – 4 inches distally to the point of the hock. This swelling is caused by the swelling of the planter ligament.

Anatomy

The Anatomical structures involved with curbs are,

- ✚ Planter Ligament
- ✚ Calcaneal Tuber
- ✚ 4th tarsal
- ✚ 4th metatarsal

Causes

Curbs can be caused by excessive violent tension or direct trauma, conformation such as Stickle Hocks & Cow Hock can play a part in predisposing a horse to this condition, this is due to the excess stress being placed on the planter ligament.

Horses with good conformation can also acquire curbs from their Work load, horses such as show jumpers and western performance horses as well as sports horses including polo & Polocrosse horses are at risk.

Horses can also acquire curbs be violent extension trauma caused by kicking stable walls or kicking out in trucks and trailers.

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Clinical Signs

In the acute stage there can be signs of inflammation and lameness of the planter ligament, there will be heat over the affected area and a pain response on palpitation. Horses will want to stand with their heels elevated relieving the tension on the planter ligament. The swelling does not normally diminish with exercise and lameness may increase.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is based on clinical signs and confirmation of a swelling can be carried out using an ultrasound.

Treatment

Veterinary

In the acute stages of a ligament strain rest is recommended with controlled exercise. The use of cold hosing & cool packs for 48h can be advantages, NSAID's can also be used for pain relief.

Box rest for up to 6 weeks with controlled walking in hand exercise after 2 weeks of rest also be advised.

Farrier

A good Medial/Lateral & Dorsal/Palmar balanced trim is important as well as regaining a good Hoof Pastern Axis, if deemed necessary raising the heels with the use of a graduated heels can reduce the tension being placed on the palmar ligament, (Calking are not advised as they will jar the affected ligament.

Prognosis

Horses with good conformation have a good prognosis as long as the acute swelling is controlled, however horses with poor hind limb conformation can suffer with chronic overloading of the planter ligament and suffer with a permanent blemish and the prognosis can be reduced to unfavourable, horses however can normally still perform at a good level of performance.

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