

Hey Neighbor



## For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

### Horse founder can usually be prevented

Founder is a common horse ailment that is easier to avert than to treat.

"There are many causes of founder, which affects a horse's whole body showing itself as painful feet. Owner precautions can usually eliminate the problem," according to Dr. Mike Whitehair, at the Abilene Animal Hospital.

Grass founder is probably the most common problem as horses graze rich pastures. Horses gorging on grain may also easily founder.

"Ponies and fat horses are more likely to founder from rich feed than horses of normal weight," Whitehair noted.

Water could cause founder when horses take on large amounts after being without for an extended time. Horses worked on hard ground or hauled for long rides in

trailers without cushioning can develop road founder.

Mares may founder after foaling if the uterus retains some of the membranes that surround the foal.

Other causes of founder include stress, certain drugs, walnut shavings, inherited tiny feet, standing for long periods without exercise and injured legs causing excessive pressure on other feet.

Most obvious symptom of founder is when the horse stands on his heels, to help relieve pressure on his toes, and when he is reluctant to walk, Whitehair described.

"Owners can also check for founder by placing a hand on the fetlock to feel the digital pulse," Whitehair explained. "If there is a rapid pounding, there is

probably a problem."

Time becomes of the essence when it is determined that a horse has foundered, and a veterinarian must be called immediately, Whitehair emphasized.

"The clock is on, and the offending agent must be removed as possible," he stressed. "If the problem came from overconsumption, and the diagnosis was made soon enough, oils can be administered to evacuate feedstuffs in the horse and reduce severity of the founder."

Action must be taken to see how severe the founder is and how aggressive therapy needs to be.

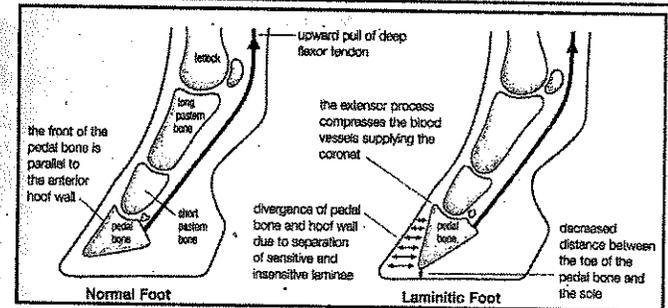
A veterinarian would likely use a simple hoof tester to see how much pain there is in the toe area. "I will then usually do a radiograph to meas-

ure if the coffin bone has moved away from the wall of the hoof," Whitehair explained.

The healthy coffin bone is fastened to the inside of the hoof wall by interlocking sensitive and insensitive laminae. "When the laminae become inflamed," Whitehair said, "they start to break down, and the horse is said to have laminitis.

"If the inflammation causes enough cell death to destroy or damage the interlocking bond between the hoof wall and the coffin bone, the coffin bone can start to rotate, which is a serious problem," Whitehair confirmed.

Technically, laminitis is not founder, the common lay term used interchangeably for the problem. However, laminitis is a condition that can lead to founder, a maritime word that means "sinking." Founder is actually acute laminitis, when the inflamed laminae begin to



The pedal bone is the same as the coffin bone.

die, allowing the coffin bone to sink or rotate.

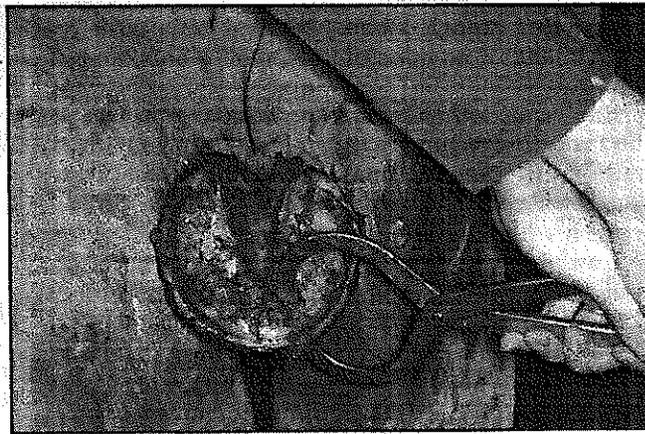
Horses that are foundered for several days before they are diagnosed can have severe and long-term complications.

"Changes can occur very quickly, and experiments have shown that they can start to happen within two to three hours. Coffin bone rotations can follow within a couple of

days," Whitehair elaborated.

"Treatment and recovery from founder varies from horse to horse. It is a natural healing process," Whitehair stated. "However, about 95 percent of horses that founder can have a useful life. It is sometimes quite complicated and requires cooperation from owner, farrier and veterinarian."

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A veterinarian usually checks for founder in a horse with a hoof tester to find out if there is increased sensitivity to pressure in the area of the sole between the point of the frog and the toe.

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In worst-case scenarios, death can occur. For other situations, surgery might be required to make a foundered horse productive again. Special shoeing is essential in many founder cases.

Once a horse has foundered, it is more likely to founder again. "Due to impairment of circulation in the foot, the potential for relapse is a higher

possibility," Whitehair pointed out.

Horses that develop chronic founder might have intermittent lameness on stony ground, sore feet after trimming, abnormal hoof growth, founder sores in the bottom of the foot or pus in the foot. Foundered horses will also sometimes develop a cresty neck.

Prevention is always better than cure for horse founder.

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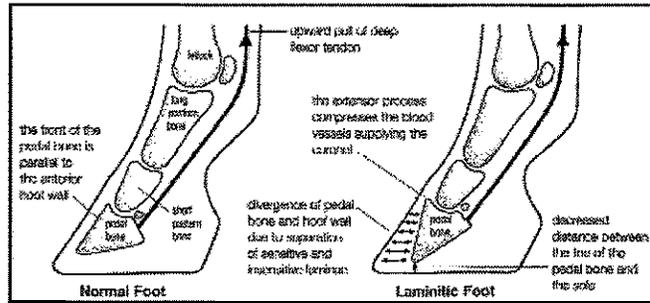
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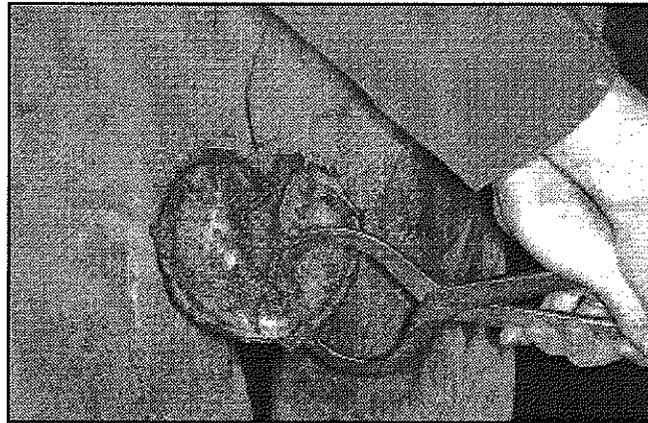
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