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FOR SPLINT LAMENESS

How to Deal With This Trouble in Young Horses.

A Bone Affection — Young Animals Most Commonly Affected—Symptoms Described and Treatment Offered.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto.)

SPLINT lameness is a common complaint in young horses, and occasionally seen in horses of any age. It is rarely noticed in the hind limbs.

In order to understand and appreciate the trouble it is necessary to have an intelligent idea of the bony anatomy of the horse from the knee to the fetlock. This part is usually called the cannon. It consists of three bones: one large cannon bone extending the whole distance, from the knee in the fore limb, and from the hock in the hind limb to their respective fetlock joints. This bone has a broad and somewhat flat posterior surface. To each edge of this surface is attached (by ligamentous attachment) a small somewhat triangular-shaped bone, of considerable size above, where it articulates with the bones of the knee joint, and gradually decreases in size as it extends downwards, becoming quite small, and terminating in a small somewhat pea-shaped nodule, a little more than two-thirds down the large bone. These nodules can be readily felt, one on each side of the posterior aspect of the large bone, a few inches above the fetlock.

A splint consists in a bony union between the large and small bones.

Inflammation is set up, usually by concussion during travelling, especially on hard roads. As a result of this inflammation an exudate is thrown out, and the ligamentous attachment is destroyed. The exudate is, of course, soft at first, but soon become converted into bone and unites the large and small bones by bony union. An enlargement of greater or less size can usually be seen, which, in most cases, gradually disappears, by absorption until nothing can be noticed, and in many cases cannot be detected even by manipulation; at the same time the ossific (bony) union between the bones is permanent. Hence a horse that once has a splint will always have it, although all visible symptoms may have disappeared.

We often hear people say that "A horse over seven years old never has splints." This arises from the fact that the visible enlargement has usually disappeared, but the union of the bones remains. This absorption does not always occur. It is not uncommon to observe well marked splints in horses of any age. In some cases the splint is not marked, but an enlargement is noticeable on each side of the limb. In such cases there is usually a bony deposit extending across the posterior surface of the large bone, from one splint to the other. This often causes an irritation to the suspensory ligament (which passes down this surface), and causes permanent lameness. Splints seldom cause persistent or permanent lameness.

Symptoms.—In many cases no lameness is caused. The first intimation of the presence of splint is the appearance of the enlargement, which usually gradually disappears. In other cases lameness is well marked, and is usually characteristic. A horse lame from splint will usually stand and walk sound, but if asked to jog or trot will show well marked lameness, the head dropping decidedly when the foot of the sound leg touches the ground. The lameness is often noticed before there is any visible enlargement. The lameness is more marked when the horse trots down grade, and the intensity of the lameness usually increases as exercise is continued. Manipulation will usually reveal the seat of the trouble. By pressing between the thumb and finger the line of attachment between the large and small bones from the knee downwards, the seat can be located by the horse finching when the seat of the trouble is pressed. And, if severe pressure be applied he will often rear on his hind legs. The usual seat of splint is on the inner surface of the fore cannon, or it may be on the outer surface, or both, and is usually one to three inches below the knee, but may be either higher or lower. The hind limb is seldom affected, but when it is the seat is usually on the outer surface.

Treatment.—Lameness is usually present only during the inflammatory stage. When the exudate becomes ossified (converted into bone) the inflammatory action ceases and lameness disappears, except the enlargement be of sufficient size, or so situated that it irritates the suspensory ligament or involves the joint. Hence treatment should be directed to allay inflammation as promptly as possible. Splint lameness usually appears very suddenly. A horse may go perfectly sound and after a rest of a variable duration when taken out to drive again, may show the characteristic symptoms noted.

The patient should be given perfect rest, and the seat of the splint

should be showered with cold water frequently, or pounded ice kept to it for a few days. This will often be all that is necessary. In other cases lameness is more persistent, and it is necessary to apply a blister. A blister made of one dram each of biniodide of mercury and cantharides mixed with one oz. vaseline, and applied in the ordinary way will usually effect a cure. In some cases it is necessary to blister the second time (in about a month). In rare cases an operation by a veterinarian is necessary.

When lameness is not shown it is seldom considered necessary to treat splint, as the enlargement usually, gradually disappears without treatment.—J. H. REED, V.S., O. A. College, Guelph.

ABOUT WEANING FOALS

They Should be Nursed at Least Four Months.

A Sudden Change of Diet Not Good for the Young Colt—Wean Him Gradually—General Hints on Rationing and Handling.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto.)

THE age at which foals should be weaned is to a great degree governed by circumstances. Under ordinary conditions it is well to allow the mare to nurse her foal for four months or longer. If, when the foal is this age, the mare is required to do regular work, both will do better if the foal be weaned. On the other hand, if the mare be in fair condition, not required for regular work, and still yielding a reasonable quantity of milk, the foal will do better if not weaned for a month or two longer, and the dam, having no labor to perform, will not suffer.

The ordinary process of weaning, which consists in separating mare and foal, and allowing no further intercourse for several weeks, or until the mare has ceased to secrete milk, and the foal to look for it, is in our opinion, irrational, wasteful and uncalled for.

It is probably unnecessary to state that the colt should be taught to eat chopped or rolled oats, bran, etc., before the process of weaning commences, otherwise he will surely suffer and grow thin. Experience has taught all breeders and feeders of stock that sudden or violent changes of diet or usage with any class of stock is dangerous and often expensive. When this is the case with adult animals, it is reasonable to expect it to be more marked in the young. Hence, in order to avoid danger of digestive diseases in the young, and trouble with the mammary glands, and possibly digestive trouble also, in the dam, we should exercise good judgement, and be satisfied to take considerable trouble when weaning the colt.

In most cases the mammary apparatus is still quite active, and a considerable quantity of milk is being secreted when the owner decides that it is time to "wean the colt." The colt, in addition to the grass and grain that it has been consuming, has thus far been accustomed to milk also. In fact, milk has been his principal diet, and, if suddenly deprived of it he cannot avoid fretting, and falling in condition. Then again, the secretion of milk in the mare will not cease all at once, and, unless the glands be relieved of inflammation will be the result. Instead of milking the mare by hand, and, of course, making no use of it, as is usually done, the colt should get the benefit. Our idea of the proper method of weaning is as follows:

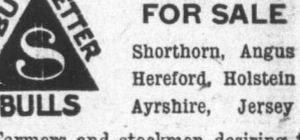
When it is decided that the colt shall be weaned, he should be placed in a comfortable box stall, by himself, or with other colts that are being weaned. There should be no mangers or boxes into which he can rear or jump, and probably injure himself, and the door and walls should be so high that he cannot jump over them or get his fore feet over. The dam should be tied, in a stall, or better, if convenient, kept in a box stall, not necessarily far removed from her foal. In fact, the writer has made a practice of having the stalls adjoining, so that the dam and foal can see and hear each other, but cannot get together. Whether or not the mare be required for work, she should be taken to the colt's stall, or better, the colt lead to the dam's stall, and allowed to remain for 15 to 20 minutes three times daily for a week or longer. Leading the colt to the dam's stall, is a good system of giving him his first lessons in training for future usefulness. During the second week, twice daily will be sufficient to leave them together, and after this once daily, gradually shortening the length of the visit until the mammal becomes practically inactive. In this way each gradually becomes accustomed to be separated from the other. The change of diet for the colt is gradual, and he receives the benefit of the milk that otherwise would be wasted. It also largely obviates danger of mammitis in the mare, and the glands gradually become inactive. In the meantime the colt should be

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