

Recognizing a Clubfoot in your horse

What is Clubfoot?

A clubfoot is characterized by a short toe – long heel, the primary problem is a contraction syndrome in the deep digital flexor muscle located between the elbow and the back of the knee. A more serious type of club foot is caused by shortening of the deep digital flexor muscle tendon that attaches to the coffin bone. Clubfeet can be diagnosed early in foals and will usually show signs before 6 months of age. The condition may be genetic or may also be related to nutritional deficiency. Most cases of the Clubfoot can be corrected with farrier work, but there are some severe cases which require surgery.

The following images illustrate the grades of clubfoot



Grade 1--The hoof angle is three to five degrees greater and the feet are mis-matched.



Grade 2--The hoof angle is five to eight degrees greater than the opposing foot with growth rings wider at the heel than at the toe. The heel will not touch the ground when trimmed to normal length.



Grade 3—The hoof wall growth rings are twice as wide at the heels than the toe and the wall is dished. The coronary band protrudes over the dorsal surface of the hoof wall.



Grade 4—The affected hoof wall angle is 80 degrees or greater and is dished. The sole of the foot bears the majority of the weight.

Xray of Clubfoot



Treatment

Grade 1 and Grade 2 can usually be treated with corrective farrier work involving realigning the hoof pastern axis by lowering the heel. A tip shoe can be fitted with an extended toe to allow greater tension on the deep digital flexor tendon in hopes of lengthening it.

In the case of clubfoot in foals, mild to moderate clubfeet if diagnosed early can be treated with a toe extension. Use of oxytetracyclines in foals is a treatment that promotes relaxation of muscle fibers.

In severe cases that were unresponsive to corrective farrier work, the treatment option of choice is surgery. The surgery involves transecting the inferior check ligament.

Before Surgery and Corrective Farrier Work



After Surgery and Corrective Farrier Work

