



Spring Founder Prevention

Spring is the time when horses are most likely to founder. Founder, also known as laminitis, is a very painful and debilitating hoof condition in horses. It can have a handful of different causes, but the most common is pasture-caused founder which occurs when a horse consumes too much rich grass in a short amount of time. A second cause can be overwhelming the horses system with vaccinations, worming, etc. all at the same time.

We're coming to that time of year again when so many horse owners feel pressure to have their vets out to do spring shots, tube worming, sheath cleaning and floating...all on the same day. It's what most horse owners do, and what many boarding barns require. We know it's traditional, and certainly more convenient, to get everything scheduled on the same day. But is it safe?

The safer route to take is to break these things up, with several weeks between some of the services. You may want to consider not doing so many different shots on the same day, or combining worming and shots on the same day. We have found that doing so many things at once risks pushing more vulnerable horses over the edge into laminitis. Take things slower this spring.

Following a chemical worming, NWNHC recommends a liver and intestinal cleansing with one week of prebiotic (Dyna-Pro) and three days of a pH balancer and detoxifier (Excel) to remove any residual toxins from your horse and restore healthy gut bacteria.

In the case of "grass founder," the sudden change of diet from all-hay to all-new-grass can trigger laminitis. It is safer to make sure horses are still eating some hay every day in the spring. It may be tempting to economize on hay and just turn them out when the fields green up, but it's not worth the risk. The new spring grass is lower in minerals and higher in sugar.

One sign that a horse is eating all new grass and no hay is a sudden reduction in water consumption, due to the high moisture content in the new grass. If a horse with access to a lot of grass is suddenly going from drinking 5-10 gallons of water a day, down to 1 gallon a day, this is not a good sign.

Here are some first aid tips if your horse does founder:

1. Trim to get a hoof form that results in a ground-parallel coffin bone.
2. Ice hooves, or stand the horse in cold water.
3. Provide three doses of Excel detoxifier or a dose or two of activated charcoal.

4. Eliminate sweet feed, rich hay or new spring grass. Diet should be low in sugars and non-fiber carbohydrates. Choose grass hay that tests low in NSC (nonstructural carbohydrates) and NFC (nonfibrous carbohydrates).
5. If keeping weight on is a problem, you can add a high-energy supplement like Dynamite HES or beet pulp to a grass hay diet. Do not add molasses as it is high in sugar!
6. Do not give steroids.

For severe cases, your veterinarian may recommend a daily dose of Bute. Be sure to detoxify your horse following the course of medicine. You may also want to use horse boots to provide additional comfort to your horse if they have access to rocky turnout areas during their recovery.

At NWNHC we have successfully used the following products to prevent and treat founder.



Dynamite Excel – Excel is a digestion catalyst, toxin neutralizer, and pH stabilizer. It is intended to be used with a complete nutritional program that includes quality vitamins and minerals. Excel can be used as a top dressing with the feed. Also use for 3 days following worming to remove excess toxins and rebalance the gut.

Dyna-Pro Prebiotic -- Dyna Pro uses a fermentation extract that nourishes the natural good gut bacteria and encourages them to reproduce and multiply.

Products available online at:
shop.nwnhc.com

Or in-store at:
NWNHC Store
32925 SE 46th St., Bldg A
Fall City, Wash.

