




**Ask the
VMD**

Leon Riegel



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Floundering with founder

A reader asks:
What can be done to prevent a horse from foundering? My farrier recently told me horses founder when they eat too much hay, drink too much water, are in foal, or are worked too hard on paved roads. At that rate, what horse hasn't foundered? It seems just about anything causes it. Please give more insight into what causes this hoof problem and what can be done to prevent it.

Dr. Sheaffer replies.
What many horse owners call foundering more properly should be termed laminitis — inflammation of the lamina (layers) of the foot or hoof

Your farrier was partially correct in listing the causes of laminitis. And, if it is diagnosed and treated in its early stages, your farrier will not see the changes in the hooves this disease creates.

Now, let's compare your farrier's list with the list of most common causes of laminitis observed in our practice at Valley Animal Hospital.

Causes of laminitis in horses include:

- overeating of high energy grains, especially corn, barley, wheat and sweet feeds,
- overeating succulent forage, especially corn silage, haylage, alfalfa hay and clover hay, or any of the various legume hays,
- eating moldy feed,

— drinking cold water while still hot from strenuous exercise,

— retaining placental membranes following normal births or abortions with mares developing post partum infections,

— hard riding or driving on paved roads causing road founder due to the concussion on the structures of the hoof,

— infectious diseases with high fevers for moderate to long periods of time (two days or more),

— severe loads of internal parasites, and

— toxic substances including wormers and other medications if overdosed or given to a debilitated horse.

Now that you know some of the factors that cause laminitis, what

can be done to prevent the condition?

If you suspect your horse has eaten too much grain or hay and it begins to show signs of colic or heat and soreness in the hooves, you must have the horse treated immediately. Call your veterinarian and request the horse be treated within 24 hours.

Keep your feed room or feed box closed with a horseproof latch or lock. Storing your grain this way also will help prevent molding. If the feed should happen to mold, discard it in a manner that no livestock will find it and eat it.

And, give your horse precalculated and measured amounts of grain and hay according to its needs for growth, exercise, maintenance, etc.

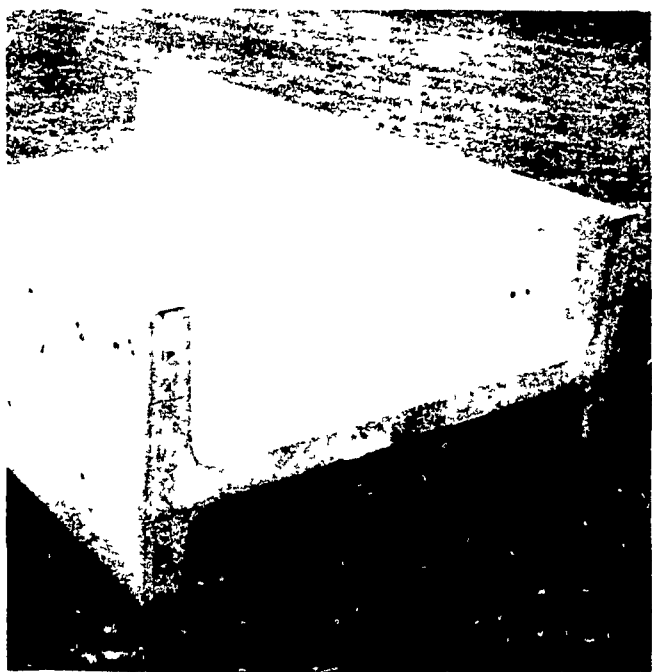
When riding your horse, do not continue to ride on paved roads if it shows signs of sore feet or muscle tie-up. The best idea is to stop and rest for a few minutes.

And, after a hard ride, don't let a hot horse drink a lot of cold water. Many horses are smarter than their riders and won't drink cold water at all when they've gone through excessive stress. In the winter, you might want to warm the horse's drinking water and only allow it to drink a small amount until it's cooled out.

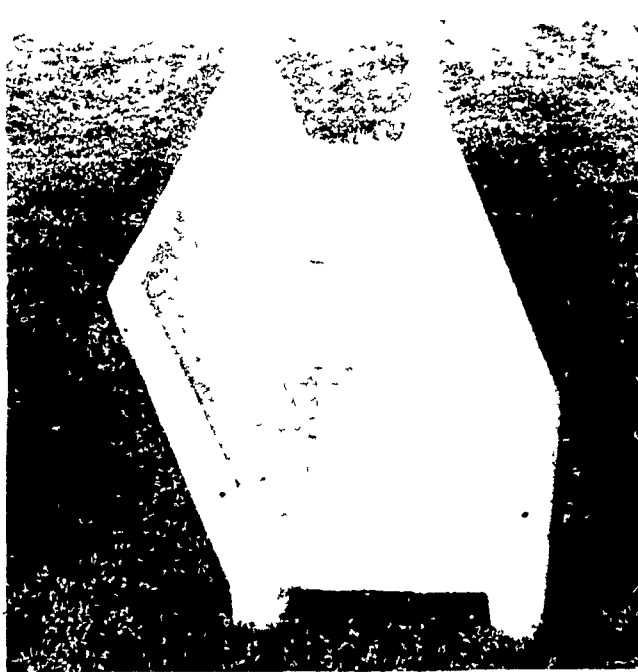
Finally, keep pregnant mares on a good health program. This means regular feeding, adequate vitamins, regular worming, and vaccinations to prevent equine virus abortion, according to your veterinarian's recommendations.



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