

Bone & joint problems

What to expect when your horse has a common lameness-causing condition

Many factors influence the prognosis of an injury and the rate of a horse's recovery. His conformation, temperament and use are vital factors. So are the location and severity of the problem as well as the quality of care he receives. Still, it can be helpful to know in even general terms what to expect when your horse has a bone or joint injury or condition. Here is a sample of outlooks for a variety of common problems.

	CONDITION	DESCRIPTION	FACTORS THAT AFFECT OUTCOME	BEST CASE	WORST CASE
COFFIN BONE	low ringbone	arthritis of the coffin joint	horse's conformation, shoeing, type of work, terrain	no cure, but management maintains soundness for steady duty	progressive degeneration cripples within a few months
	pedal osteitis	inflammation of the coffin bone	whether injury is due to a single trauma or chronic stress	100 percent recovery in two to three weeks	chronic, progressive condition worsens
	sidebone	conversion of one or both collateral cartilages of the coffin bone into bone	rest, shoeing	no noticeable lameness; 100 percent recovery	in rare cases, mild or intermittent lameness persists
PASTERN	high ringbone	arthritis of the pastern joint	horse's conformation, shoeing, type of work, terrain	no cure, but management maintains soundness for steady duty	progressive degeneration cripples in a few months
HOCK	bog spavin	swelling of the hock joint capsule	degree of injury to cartilage or associated ligament	100 percent recovery within days	permanent, degenerative condition worsens
	bone spavin	bone enlargement and/or degeneration on the inner surface of the hock	treatment aimed at delaying bone formation or at speeding joint fusion (ankylosis)	no noticeable lameness, 100 percent recovery	permanent lameness; recovery no more than 75 percent
	curb	thickening of the plantar ligament at the back of the hock	sickle hocks, type of work	100 percent recovery within two to three weeks	90 percent recovery within months to a year
	upward fixation of the patella	displacement of the patella (kneecap) periodically locks the hind leg into an extended position; pain and inflammation linger	conformation, specifically "straight" hind limbs; better physical condition reduces the chance of recurrence	a single-time or only occasional annoyance with no lasting effects	chronic problem prohibits athletic activity
STIFLE					