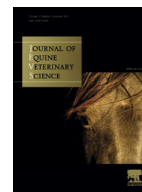




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International Equine Conference on Laminitis and Diseases of the Foot

Director's Corner

In the midst of all the planning for the International Laminitis Conference, when I sit down to write the "Director's Corner" I take the time to think about the past 2 years and reflect on the challenges and accomplishments of our ongoing mutual effort. The image is of a conference which today encompasses a global community of dedicated professionals who have significantly influenced the world of laminitis and its understanding, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. We are a multinational community, bound by a common goal, and no matter what your level of involvement with our conference, you are a proud contributor to the cause; and as such, you can be delighted with the progress we have inspired and created together.

As a community, it is important that we periodically gather together to work, share valuable information and experiences, and brainstorm pathways to the future. In setting the goal of conquering laminitis by 2020, Dr. Rustin Moore has galvanized our efforts and given them a time frame. To further demonstrate his dedication to our cause, Rusty has joined me as the co-director of the conference. Well-known for his leadership in laminitis research, and now as Chairperson of the Department of Clinical Sciences at The Ohio State University, Rusty has been a faculty member of our conference since 2007. His visionary paper entitled "Vision 20/20–Conquer Laminitis by 2020," set the benchmark for all of our efforts, as well as comparable work in the world of equine care.

The past several years have been very productive and it is clear that the progress of our work is leading us on the correct path to achieving our goal. As we strengthen the fabric of our community, the bonds and alliances formed during our conferences are the foundation of our ever-expanding effort. So, as I welcome you to the 2013 International Equine Conference on Laminitis and Diseases of the Foot, I encourage you to not only immerse yourself in the many sessions and workshops being offered, but also to take advantage of this unique opportunity to interact with your fellow professionals. While current technology provides us with the ability to stay in touch between meetings, individual face-to-face interactions fuel our otherwise long-distance communications.

Our 2013 conference takes on a different look this year. When we invited abstract submissions, our original expectation was a modest dozen or so submissions. To our surprise, we received an astounding 75 abstracts, many of which are

exceptional. This incredible response promises to provide valuable new information from around the world and across the United States. In addition to the planning of the 2013 Laminitis Conference, we have started work on several new projects and continued work on existing programs.

One key ingredient in expanding our international audience has been the Laminitis Conference website (www.laminitisconference.com), which is continually updated with relevant articles, related links, and other information that our audience will find helpful. A multilingual Laminitis 911 Guide is in the planning stages. To help caretakers, we envision the Guide to be a vital information resource that is displayed in every equine barn and stable. The information guide will identify 10 steps to take if a caretaker suspects a horse has laminitis. It will give the user a "What to Do" protocol until the veterinarian arrives. The main goal is to aid in recognizing horses that are at risk, and hopefully provide earlier intervention, thereby increasing the chances for effective treatment and avoidance of chronic laminitis.

We are also working on "Laminitis Health Partners," a global web-based resource map of veterinarians and farriers working as a team which will enable horse owners to locate teams of professionals to treat horses afflicted with laminitis. The Laminitis Institute receives endless requests for consultations, nationally and internationally, from owners who are unable to find the expertise they urgently need in a laminitis emergency. Our goal is to establish a database of conference attendees and their contact information—individuals who have received additional education and training in managing horses with laminitis. With more than 1,000 attendees from our recent conferences as a start, we could be well on our way to creating this vital tool that extends the reach of our members around the globe.

I would be remiss if I did not mention another accomplishment over the past 2 years: the Laminitis West Conference hosted by Steinbeck County Equine Clinic. Laminitis West 2012 took a different tack, highlighting diseases of the distal limb and focusing on diagnosis and therapeutic approaches to improving our ability to better recognize and treat these problems. The emphasis was on regenerative medicine and MRI, case-study workshops on the proper technique for foot cast application, and workshops on therapeutic shoes and their use in managing challenging foot problems.

While I want to express my gratitude to everyone who has been a part of the planning for this conference, there are a few individuals whose efforts are transcendent, most notably the conference co-founders John and Marianne Castle, who are both visionaries and never-ending supporters of the battle to end laminitis; and Margaret Hamilton Duprey, who has been a key member of the Conference Board and Chair of the Owners Program.

I would also like to express my thanks to all the Program Chairs who worked on this conference. Their professionalism, dedication, and unending patience were an asset to the entire planning process. A special thanks goes to Dr. Nora Grenager, Chair of the Practical Focus Program One and Chair of the Student Scholarship Program. Nora wears many hats in our organization, serving as a leader, problem solver, spokesperson, and Guest Editor for the Proceedings.

I would like to officially welcome all of you to the 2013 International Laminitis Conference and I look forward to meeting and talking with each one of you as we continue our journey on the path to conquering laminitis. With the principle of our conference being “global community,” we will forge ahead, stronger than ever, in our support of each other and our equine friends.

James A. Orsini, DVM, Dipl ACVS
Co-Director

2013 International Equine Conference on Laminitis and
Diseases of the Foot

The Thrill of Victory–The Agony (and Pain) of Defeat

Where are we 40 years after Secretariat won the prized Thoroughbred Triple Crown and 24 years after his death to laminitis?

Forty years after winning the Belmont Stakes by an astounding 31 lengths and capturing the 1973 Thoroughbred Triple Crown, Secretariat remains “America’s Horse” and a sports legend, being voted 35th in ESPN’s Top 100 Athletes of the 20th Century. Much has changed in veterinary medicine in the 24 years since Secretariat’s untimely death, succumbing to laminitis at the age of 19. Much progress has been made in many areas of equine medicine and surgery due to advances in understanding of the disease from contributions in basic, applied, and translational research as well as clinical experience, observations, and discoveries. Yet despite the span of almost a quarter of a century since Secretariat’s death and some significant advances in our understanding of the disease, equine veterinarians and the research community remain perplexed by the complexities and mysteries of this devastating disease, known as laminitis or founder.

We know much more about laminitis in 2013 than we did in 1989; however, we still have not solved the laminitis puzzle. In fact, the more we learn, the more we appreciate how little we really know. A complete knowledge and understanding remains elusive and therefore preventive and therapeutic strategies are empirical at best, most lacking sufficient foundation for evidence-based medicine.

One thing remains certain: the focus needs to be on better understanding of the triggering events, various mechanisms, multiple pathways, and risk factors so that we can more effectively and reliably implement preventive strategies *before* laminitis develops, rather than struggling with the challenges of alleviating and reversing its devastating effects.

Many people who heard the depressing news of Secretariat’s humane destruction on October 4, 1989 to end his unrelenting pain and agony from laminitis, have little memory of the cause of his death. The most famous racehorse in history dies and few know why. How unfortunate! Secretariat’s legacy is celebrated not only for his Triple Crown victory, but for his power, commanding speed, and gigantic heart—not just metaphorically, but literally a big heart (22 lbs, compared with the average horse, whose heart weighs about 9 lbs). Yet despite all of these elite physical attributes and athletic achievements, he was no match for this dreaded disease and was unable to win his last battle, a duel with laminitis.

On this anniversary of his winning the 1973 Triple Crown races—the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness Stakes, and the Belmont Stakes—it is important to remind ourselves that nearly two and a half decades ago this extraordinary athlete, world-record setter, and the magnificent horse that is still held on a pedestal was defeated by laminitis. Countless other equine celebrities and other nameless or little-known horses have had their lives stolen as a result of laminitis. The loss of Barbaro in 2006 to support-limb laminitis after his devastating orthopedic injury at the start of the 2005 Preakness Stakes once again called attention to, and raised awareness of, the scourge of this horrific disease. On this important anniversary of Secretariat’s glorious victory and the agony and pain of defeat, what better venue than the 7th International Laminitis Conference to reignite awareness of the progress made and necessary work that remains in order to better understand, prevent, and treat this disease.

In a 2000 USDA-NAHMS report covering 1,200 equine facilities and 28,000 horses, it was estimated that 13% of equine operations had encountered at least 1 case of laminitis in the previous 12 months, for an overall incidence of 2.1%. With the estimated 8 million horses in the US, that equals about 168,000 cases of laminitis each year. Because many horses afflicted with laminitis have chronic or recurring problems, the number of horses affected by laminitis at any given time likely is substantially greater than 2%. The survey also showed that the condition is responsible for 15% of all equine lameness cases and occurs most commonly in horses at pasture. Grazing lush pasture was the most commonly listed cause (45%), followed by complications linked to diet, injury, obesity, and pregnancy. In geriatric horses, the incidence of laminitis has been recorded at 6.4%, and in the United Kingdom a survey of over 100,000 horses reported an incidence of 7.1%. It has been estimated that 15% of horses in the US are afflicted by laminitis during their lifetime. It is also estimated that as many as 75% of horses that have an episode of laminitis eventually develop severe or chronic lameness and debilitation.

Although there have been a number of laminitis risk factors identified, epidemiologic studies are limited. A survey

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