“Wind” problems in horses are widely documented, and involve conditions of the upper airway and larynx that reduce airflow to the lungs and hinder performance. This airflow impairment can be heard as a noise (whistle or gurgle) when listening to a horse at exercise. Any abnormalities can be visualised using an endoscope placed in the horse’s airway while cantering, a practice routinely carried out at MJR on horses heard to make a noise. Many of these problems get better with fitness and conditioning, but a small number may require surgery to maintain better airflow to the lungs. Exercise Induced Pulmonary Haemorrhage is bleeding from very small blood vessels in the lungs after strenuous exercise. It is characterised by blood appearing in the airways and occasionally at the nostrils. A horse may also cough as the blood irritates the airway. There is sadly no guaranteed preventative treatment and cases are treated with rest and anti-inflammatory drugs. Turning out can often improve the health of the airways.

Mild and passive infections of the upper respiratory tract are very common and have many similarities with colds in humans. They are often viral in origin but may have a bacterial component. They are characterised by nasal discharge, coughing and the horse being slightly dull. These infections often resolve on their own but clinical signs can be reduced with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs if required.

Skin wounds and infectious disease of the skin are extremely common. Ringworm and infected spots are frequently seen, especially in younger horses. They tend to get better without intervention, but, if they affect the tack positioning, the horse may require a short period without being ridden.

Skin


Pelvis


Foot


The pelvis in a horse is best thought of as a large bone frame upon which the strong muscles of propulsion attach and exert their forces on the limb. Due to the large forces placed on the bones of the pelvis, fractures can sometimes occur. The severity and consequences of these injuries vary with any fracture I have mentioned, vary massively depending on their position and any displacement of the fracture. Horses are placed on box rest until sound after a pelvic fracture to prevent any chance of displacing the fracture during the early stages of healing. They then go through a gradual return to exercise, spending 4-6 weeks on the walker and equal time walking and trotting before a return to cantering.

Cannon


This article is an overview of the anatomy of the horse and our graphic shows some common sites of problems that may require veterinary intervention. If readers would like a more in-depth article on any of the areas covered here, please email klarion@markjohnstonracing.com and we will try to oblige.