

Fact Sheet

Equine Arthritis (DJD)

What is equine arthritis?

DJD (degenerative joint disease) describes a process in the joint where the joint cartilage is progressively destroyed and changes occur in the associated bones and soft tissues.



Is it common in horses?

DJD is a very common problem affecting many horses, especially senior horses.

It can be a painful disease that causes inflammation within the joint and commonly affects hocks, pasterns, front fetlocks, and coffin joints although any joint may be affected.



Signs of DJD

- Lameness
- Reluctance to work
- A change in behaviour
- Stiffness
- Muscle wastage
- Effusion (swelling) of the joints
- Reluctance to lift limbs for farrier



How is DJD diagnosed?

- Clinical examination by your vet in hand and possibly under saddle
- Flexion tests
- Nerve blocks
- Radiographs

Further diagnosis:

- MRI
- Scintigraphy (BSC)
- Arthroscopy



This radiograph shows osteophytes caused by inflammation (degenerative arthritis) on the horse's pastern.



An image of a horse in MRI

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DJD can't be reversed so good management is essential to keep the horse comfortable and reduce the pain.

How is DJD managed?

- Managing the horse's weight is essential. Overweight horses put additional strain on their joints
- If possible, gentle and regular exercise can be beneficial
- Regular turnout to keep your horse moving
- Good farriery is essential
- A joint supplement can help to manage DJD (ask your vet for advice on the best one)
- Anti-inflammatory drugs, prescribed by your vet, can help to reduce the pain
- Intra-articular medication (medications injected into the joint)
- Other systemic medications such as bisphosphonates or pentosan polysulphate



For further information, please contact your local VetPartners Equine Veterinary Practice on:

vetPartners

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Together with our practices, our focus is on providing an excellent service to our equine clients. No two practices are the same, and we understand and embrace that independent spirit.