SOUTH SHORE EQUINE CLINC
& DIAGNOSTIC CENTER
151 PALMER ROAD
PLYMPTON, MA 02367
781-585-2611

www.ssequineclinic.com

TENDON & SUSPENSORY INJURIES IN THE PERFORMANCE HORSE

TENDON – Muscle to bone
LIGAMENT – Bone to bone

Suspensory Ligament

Training increases the strength of the suspensory.

Proximal – common in show horses
Front legs unilateral or bilateral
Usually sudden onset of injury, worse on soft ground
Mild to moderate lameness (unless severe injury)
90% of acute injuries of front leg - return to full athletic work
14-56% of hind leg injuries – return to work
Foot imbalance may be a predisposing factor – low heels, long toes
Common compensatory injury (sore hind end)
DIAGNOSIS: Front leg – ULTRASOUND
Hind leg - MRI

Body - common in race horses
Re-injury common
DIAGNOSIS - ULTRASOUND

Branches - common in all sport horses
Foot imbalance may be a predisposing factor
Local heat and swelling common
Degree of lameness proportional to degree of injury
**older dressage horses - adhesions w/ severe, persistent lameness
DIAGNOSIS – ULTRASOUND or MRI

Digital Flexor Tendons

Superficial (SDF)

Speed athletes – common injury (race horses, event horses)
Sedentary or lightly used horses over 15 years of age
Forelimb >> Hind limb
Prognosis dependent on severity of injury & treatment (scar tissue)
Clinical signs and severity of injury are NOT necessarily correlated
Swelling, Thickening, Heat, Pain on palpation, Profile of tendon
Acute lameness may correlated to severity of injury

DIAGNOSIS – ULTRASOUND

CSA and lesion size define severity of injury
Baseline & Follow-up scans necessary
90% of show jumpers return to full athletic function (tendonitis)

Deep (DDF) – attaches to underside of coffin bone

Rare primary injury above fetlock
Thickening and pain on palpation, +/- heat
Injuries in pastern/foot region can be career threatening
Foot conformation can be predisposing factor
Acute-onset moderate to severe lameness

DIAGNOSIS – ULTRASOUND (Above fetlock) or MRI (below fetlock)

CSA and lesion size
Baseline & Follow-up scans
Adhesions common

TREATMENT

Stall Rest
Ice Therapy
NSAIDs
Topical Therapy – Liniments, Surpass
Targeted Therapy – Shockwave, Stem Cell, PRP
Corrective /Balanced Shoeing
Surgery
Rehabilitation Schedule – severity dictates