Laminitis in horses.

Laminitis in horses occurs in the same general way as cattle; however, the cause of and the effects of it are somewhat different in a horse than they are in the bovine hoof. Although the speciﬁc cause of equine laminitis has not been entirely determined, there are a few commonly accepted triggers for an episode of laminitis. Horses that eat an excessive amount of grain at one time, such as a horse that got loose and gorged itself in the grain bin, are very susceptible to laminitis. Laminitis can also be caused by sudden changes in available carbohydrate in the diet, particularly when turning horses out in lush pasture in the spring. Excessive work on a hard surface or long trailer rides without adequate bedding or cushion can cause “road” or “mechanical founder”.

When an episode of laminitis occurs in a horse, similar events occur inside the hoof that occurs in a bovine hoof. The laminae swell and separate allowing the cofﬁn bone to pull away from the hoof wall. In horses, however, the biggest problem that they experience is from the laminitis itself, not a side-effect of the disease. In very severe cases of founder (as laminitis is often called in horses), the cofﬁn bone can actually rotate through the bottom of the sole, causing the animal immense amounts of pain. It can open the foot up to a wide variety of infection. When a horse develops laminitis, it will likely exhibit the typical “laminitis stance.” When this happens, the animal shifts the majority of its weight to the rear legs and walks very gingerly, if at all. When laminitis is ﬁrst diagnosed, a veterinarian may give the animal anti-inﬂammatory drugs, and possibly tranquilizers