

## A new hope in equine laminitis

Laminitis is a very painful condition of horses and when it becomes chronic, it can end the career or even the life of much-loved horses and ponies.

The University of Queensland School of Veterinary Science has been a world leader in equine laminitis research since the mid-1990s, making significant breakthroughs that have led to changes in the clinical approach and management of this important equine disease.

Dr's Bertin, Stewart and Medina-Torres of UQ VETS Equine Specialist Hospital are now joining forces to unravel the mechanisms behind acute and chronic laminitis in order to develop better and faster diagnostic tools to detect predisposing conditions. Among these conditions, hormonal disorders have specifically caught their attention as they are very common in Australia and specifically in Queensland. More precisely, Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) and equine pituitary *pars intermedia* dysfunction (PPID) are two under-recognised hormonal conditions that can lead to laminitis.

Their research, applied at UQ VETS Equine Specialist Hospital, has already helped many horse and pony owners across Queensland through specialist consultations, owner education and scientific presentations:

- "Thank you so much for all of your help with [my horse]. We know we wouldn't be in this situation if we didn't have you and your staff."
- "I was told that euthanasia was the only option for my stallion because of his severe laminitis and lack of an experienced farrier in our area willing to help him. The team of internal medicine clinicians diagnosed his EMS and PPID; the surgeons were able to work with Craig the master farrier and now my stallion is making amazing progress"
- "The team approach between the farrier and the equine surgeons and the internal medicine clinicians ensures we not only take care of my horse's feet, but we can now treat the underlying cause of her laminitis"
- "My mare did not have classic PPID, she had a lovely sleek coat so the cause of her laminitis was only diagnosed by the sensitive testing available at UQ-VETS"
- "UQ-VETS have diagnostic tests that are not available through our regular vet, but now we have the correct diagnosis we can specifically treat my mare's insulin problem with diet and medication"
- "Thank you so much for answering all of our questions. We are very grateful for all of your help and assistance."

This dynamic research team is educating the next generation of veterinarians and equine specialists in the latest in diagnosis and treatment strategies in equine endocrinology. The education students receive at The University of Queensland is equal to the best in the world, with The University of Queensland recently voted the number 1 veterinary school in Australasia.

Consultations at the UQ VETS Equine Specialist Hospital is by referral only so ongoing care can be continued by the local veterinarian. Please contact us to see how we can help your horse and how you can help our research programs so horses worldwide can benefit from the work performed at The University of Queensland. Donations can be made here.

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- *Establishment of seasonal reference intervals for adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) concentrations for horses in Southern Queensland;*
- *Assessment of the diagnostic value of combining diagnoses of equine Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID) and Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS);*
- *Stability of equine adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) under Australian climate;*
- *Determining the best treatment formulation to control PPID.*

