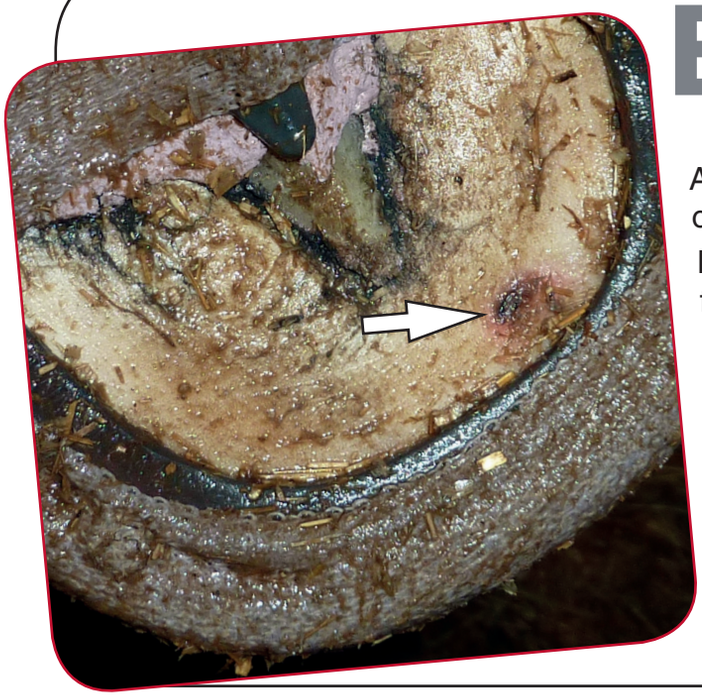
XL Vets Equine

Fact Sheet

Bruised Sole



A bruised sole is one of the most common causes of lameness in horses.

Direct trauma or injury to the underside of the foot can result in haemorrhage and inflammation beneath the sole, involving the sensitive horn producing tissues, leading to the typical dark red appearance of a bruise.

A bruised sole may be caused by accidental injury to the sole of the foot by treading on a stone or un-even ground, pressure from poorly fitting shoes or excessive work on hard ground.

CLINICAL SIGNS: (ONLY SOME MAY BE PRESENT)

- pain and lameness may vary from moderate to severe;
- increased temperature in the hoof wall;
- increased digital pulse;
- dark red or reddish/yellow discolouration of an area of the solar surface of the hoof.

Checking for a digital pulse using finger and thumb towards the back of the fetlock joint on either side.

Paring the superficial layers of sole may reveal the discolouration of a bruise.

CHECKING FOR SOLAR PAIN USING HOOF TESTERS

Diagnosis

This is often based on the clinical signs. Focal pressure applied to the sole using hoof testers/ pincers, may assist in identification of the affected area.

Nerve blocks may be necessary to localise the lameness. Visualisation of the bruise is often possible by paring the sole once the site of pain has been confirmed.

KEY POINTS:

- one of the most common reasons for forelimb foot lameness;
- caused by direct injury to the sole;
- usually sudden onset moderate-severe lameness localised to the foot;
- the horse should be rested and given pain relief;
- a simple bruise should gradually resolve over a couple of weeks.

XLEquine **Bruised Sole**

Treatment

Depending on the location of the bruise, it may be necessary to remove the shoe, to allow the area to be pared away and reduce weight bearing on the bruised area of the sole.

If the sole has been split or punctured at the time of the bruise developing, it might be necessary to apply a poultice dressing to the foot for a few days, to avoid the bruise becoming a solar abscess. This would normally need changing once daily

The patient's tetanus vaccination status should be checked and unvaccinated animals should receive a dose of antitoxin for short term cover and preferably also start a vaccination program.

Injectable or oral anti-inflammatory pain killers should be given for one to two weeks, or until the lameness has resolved, at which point the shoe can be reapplied and work resumed, initially on soft surfaces.

PREVENTION

- All horses should undergo regular foot examination and trimming by a registered farrier.
- Shoes should be carefully fitted following foot balance assessment.
- Before exercise ensure that you pick the feet out to ensure there are no stones present on the underside of the hoof, particularly in the frog clefts or wedged under the shoe.
- Do not over-exercise on hard ground.
- Horses with thin soles should avoid work on hard ground and your farrier may consider the use of protective foot pads.

HOW TO POULTICE A FOOT:

- cut a piece of poultice material large enough to cover the bruised area only;
- soak the poultice in hand hot water;
- squeeze to remove excess water;
- apply to the bruise with the plastic side facing outwards;
- apply a foot bandage to hold the poultice in place using cotton wool and a cohesive wrap;
- make a duct tape pad to place over the bandage to prevent wearing of the dressing, particularly over the toe;
- ensure the bandage and tape are not placed too tightly around the coronary band.

APPLYING A FOOT POULTICE USED TO TREAT A BRUISE WHERE THE SOLE HAS BEEN PUNCTURED OR SPLIT.

Complications

It is not uncommon for a solar bruise to progress to become a subsolar abscess. This is normally associated with a sudden deterioration in the lameness. The blood in the bruise provides a perfect medium for infection to develop. Bruises that worsen or do not start to improve within a few days should be re-examined by your vet.

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