

# 10 easy ways to manage his arthritis

Vet Imogen Burrows of the XLEquine Vet group helps you to control the condition

**1 Help him stay in shape** - excess weight puts unnecessary strain through your horse's joints, whereas thin, poorly muscled horses lack the strength needed to support correct joint function.

**2 Keep exercising** - daily exercise is a good thing. Horses often appear stiff initially, but will improve as their muscles and joints warm up. Consider ground conditions - exercise on supportive, level terrain is ideal, but avoid faster work on hard or rutted areas.

**3 Turnout is good** - arthritic horses should be turned out as much as possible to allow them to exercise their joints. Encourage walking in the field by placing hay and water at opposite ends, which has the added bonus of burning extra calories.

**4 Get him regular pedicures** - regular foot care is essential as well-balanced feet absorb concussive forces more effectively. Use an experienced farrier who'll take time with your horse as he may get stiff holding his legs up for long periods.

**5 Work with a physiotherapist** - they can provide a host of exercises that improve a joint's range of motion, improving suppleness. Lengthening and stretching helps back and neck arthritis in particular.

**6 Control his pain** - speak to your vet about using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as phenylbutazone (bute). These can minimise the pain of arthritis and help to dramatically improve his quality of life.

**7 Treat his joints** - another anti-inflammatory medication available from your vet is injections of

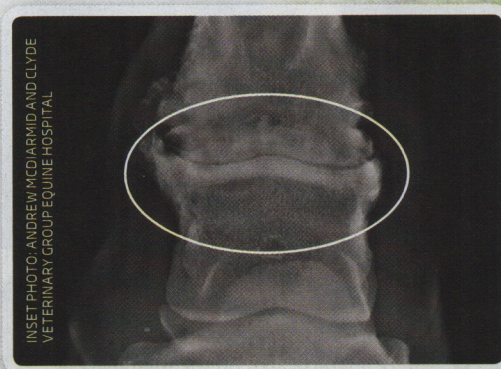
corticosteroids and hyaluronic acid (HA) into the affected joint or muscle. Corticosteroids break the cycle of inflammation, while HA improves joint fluid quality.

**8 Protect his cartilage** - Interleukin-1 (IL-1) is one of the main substances responsible for cartilage destruction, but antibodies against IL-1 can help stop these detrimental effects. An IL-1 antibody-rich serum called IRAP (interleukin receptor antagonist protein) can be injected directly into affected joints, helping to slow the progression of arthritis.

**9 Try a joint supplement** - there's a wide variety available, and while scientific evidence in support of them is sparse, ones including glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate may be of use for joint health. Talk to your vet before buying.

**10 Keep an eye out for any changes** - check your horse regularly, especially his joints. If he has arthritis it's recommended he has veterinary check-ups every four to six months.

● Find out more about Imogen and XL Equine at [www.xlvets.co.uk](http://www.xlvets.co.uk)



Extra bone growth can be seen around this arthritic pastern joint, circled left



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