



Covered Bridge Equine, P.C.
1071 Jamestown Blvd. Suite #D1
Watkinsville, Georgia 30677

Spring is the time to bring out the grazing muzzles again!



For any horses with a history of laminitis or founder, it is time to bring out the grazing muzzles again. If you prefer not to muzzle your horse, limit grazing time to 2-4 hours and preferably in the morning when grasses are lower in carbohydrates. Areas of grass in the shade also have lower sugar and carbohydrate levels.

As new grass begins to grow all horses will benefit from slow reintroduction to pasture. Gradually transition all of your horses to lush pasture by allowing them 15 minutes a day on the grass and gradually increase this time by 10 minutes every 3 days. Once a horse is up to 45 minutes of grazing for several days they are probably ready for their normal turnout regimen. This entire process will take about 10 days. Obviously, this must be adjusted for horses known to be at risk for laminitis!

For horses who have never had laminitis but who are overweight, a grazing muzzle as well as diet and exercise can be key to preventing this debilitating and sometimes fatal condition from occurring in the first place.



Figure 1 - Horses with a BCS of 7 or higher or certain breeds like ponies, minis, donkeys, Morgans, and Drafts may be at higher risk of laminitis.



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Horses whose body condition score (a measure of fat deposits on the body) is greater than 7 on a scale of 1-9 are at an increased risk of laminitis. If you think your horse is overweight, ask us to body condition score them when we are out for spring vaccines and discuss a weight loss plan. Bloodwork may also be helpful in finding an underlying cause of obesity. By measuring serum levels of glucose, insulin, cortisol, and thyroid hormones, we may be able to help you come up with management options that will keep your horse healthy for years to come.

Remember for laminitis, there is no cure; prevention is the key.



Figure 2 - Radiographs often show changes in the angle of the coffin bone in relation to the hoof wall in laminitic horses



Figure 3 - The coffin bone may sink or rotate and causes pain and inflammation in the horse's toe. This may manifest as abscess like symptoms!