

nant mares would be stricken, which is not the case either in domestic or wild horse populations. However, obese horses on unnatural diets probably are toxic, and, therefore, are Supercoriatic “powder kegs” ready to explode.

One also hears, generally among barefoot trimmers (as opposed to natural hoof care practitioners), that laminitis is caused by horseshoeing, particularly orthopedic shoeing. But there is no evidence for this claim, in my opinion. As a former (20 year) veteran shoer “turned” natural hoof care practitioner, I can’t recall a single instance in which a previously barefoot horse suddenly “foundered” as a consequence of having just been shod.

But not to let shoers, or “horseshoe happy” vets, entirely off the hook, there is no doubt in my mind that shoeing predisposes the pre-Supercoriatic hoof to an outbreak, and also impedes or prevents healing once the attack has occurred. Shoeing causes hoof contraction, which compromises circulation and weakens the hoof overall.¹ Orthopedic shoes (e.g., “heart-bars”) in particular irritate the solar corium and P3.² Shoeing also creates unnatural lever forces due to excessive growth beneath the shoe, since the capsule does not wear. Commonly, this growth then “migrates” forward into a pathologically deformed “run-under” hoof with “curled toes” and severe wall cracks (Figure 2).

SUPERCORIAITIS PATHWAY:

The Supercoriatic pathway begins with one or more dietary trigger factors (e.g., sweetened grains and green grass). These upset the horse’s *natural* digestion, setting off a chain reaction of events that culminate in the destruction of the horse-to-hoof “attachment mechanisms”.³

Figure 3 (page 4 of this article) provides a simplified schematic of the Supercoriatic pathway:

Diet

Supercoriatic (“laminitis”) originates with unnatural diet *and* unnatural feeding behavior. Diet encompasses anything we give the horse to eat or drink that

¹“Does Horseshoeing Cause Hoof Contraction”, Bulliten #111, SRP Natural Hoof Care Series

²“Supercoriatic: Laminitis Redefined”, Bulliten #102, SRP Natural Hoof Care Series

³“The Supercorium”, Bulliten #110, SRP Natural Hoof Care Series

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Figure 2 This Supercoriatic hoof had been shod for two years and refused to heal before being brought into natural hoof care.

stresses his digestive tract and results in Supercoriatic. It may come as a shock to horse owners, but many things that we believe or take for granted to be “natural” for horse consumption, are anything but. The most surprising trigger, for sure, is green grass. As recent as this winter (2002/2003), researcher Dr. Robert Eustace of the Laminitis Trust (United Kingdom), issued this warning:

It is worth recognizing that while there is much we still don’t understand about the mechanisms whereby an upset in the horse’s hindgut can lead to the devastating changes in its feet caused by laminitis, if everyone applied the knowledge we do have, then the incidence of laminitis would be reduced by about 80%. Put simply, allowing horses and ponies unrestricted access to improved pastures is putting them at high risk of developing laminitis.¹

Other likely dietary triggers are legume grasses and their hays (e.g., Alfalfa and Clover), grains (especially sweet feeds), vitamin concentrates, and pharmaceutical chemicals laced with sugars or legume concentrates.

Feeding Behavior

Feeding behavior that allows or compels the horse to ingest concentrations of these substances also contributes to the pathophysiology of Supercoriatic. While

¹Ibid, R. Eustace.