



WOBLERS SYNDROME

After posting an update on a horse with wobblers (and we have a few) there are always some comments asking what wobblers syndrome is. This fact sheet is to help people understand wobblers, what it is and how it can affect the horses.

Wobbler Syndrome is an unstable gait and is now recognised as encompassing a number of disease conditions. Spinal Cord Compression at the cervical (neck) level which is called cervical vertebral stenotic myelopathy is the most common form of wobbler syndrome. In short these horses suffer from “ataxia” which is the inability to feel where their feet are placed. Some cases are very mild from just a stiff neck to more severe cases where the horses appear drunk. The potential inherited nature of this disease has been widely debated. To date, no single cause of the condition has been identified.

Diagnosis

To achieve a good outcome it is crucial to recognise the signs of wobblers and identify the surgical candidates early. A neurologic examination will need to be performed by a specialist veterinarian to identify any lesions on the spinal cord or brain. Further tests are required such as radiography of the cervical spine and also a myelogram which is where contrast dye is injected into the spinal canal under a general anaesthetic. (The contrast media will highlight the roof and floor of the spinal canal, allowing visualisation of any significant narrowing.)

Treatment

There is no cure for wobblers syndrome, and a wobbler that isn't treated may deteriorate neurologically - sometimes to the point of being a danger to themselves and to the people handling them. There are some surgical options if it is detected early in a young horse, however these options are expensive and it only stalls the deterioration, it doesn't actually cure the disease.

We have been successful in managing the symptoms with acupuncture and massage but this isn't a long term fix either.

If you have a horse you suspect has wobblers it is always best to have the horse treated by a specialist vet to properly diagnose the problem and speak to your vet about surgery options if they are available to you. You must be armed with all of the information including the risks, financial liability, and responsibility involved in making such a decision.

Prevention

No single cause of cervical vertebral stenotic myelopathy has been identified. There are some studies which suggest it could be genetic / hereditary and other causes are from injury to the spinal cord.

Our Wobblers

Our wobblers will stay in care with us until such time as their condition causes them pain or if they become a danger to themselves or our staff. If this occurs they will be humanely euthanised.

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