



Bog Spavin

Bog spavin is fluid distension of the high mobility joint in the hock called the tibiotarsal or tarsocrural joint. The swelling can be seen and felt at the two superficial outpouchings of the joint capsule; at the front towards the inside and on the outside just below and in front of the point of hock. If one swelling is compressed this usually causes the other swelling to enlarge temporarily and vice versa. Bog spavin can occur in one or both hind legs.

Clinical signs

Bog spavin is a clinical sign rather than a diagnosis. The swelling is caused by inflammation of the joint lining and an increase in the fluid inside the joint. It should not be confused with bone spavin (firm swelling due to osteoarthritis in the lower joints of the hock) or thoroughpin (where the swelling is at the back of the leg, just above the point-of-hock).

Many horses with bog spavin show no lameness and do not require treatment.

Some conditions result in joint inflammation with pain and lameness and these necessitate further investigation in order to allow treatment targeted to the underlying cause.



STRAIGHT HOCK CONFORMATION CAN PREDISPOSE HORSES TO THE CONDITION

DAIGNOSIS

Investigation of the underlying cause may require diagnostic investigations including:

- nerve blocks
- x-rays
- ultrasound scan
- bone scan
- arthroscopy (keyhole surgery).

KEY POINTS:

- bog spavin is fluid distension of the tarsocrural (tibiotarsal) joint of the hock;
- may be caused by arthritis of the joint, osteochondrosis (OCD), trauma, infection or certain vitamin deficiencies;
- many cases are of uncertain cause classified as idiopathic bog spavin;
- straight hock conformation can predispose horses to bog spavin;
- cases of idiopathic bog spavin usually do not require treatment.

Treatment

Treatment will depend upon the underlying cause. Many horses with bog spavin do not require treatment.

- Rest and anti-inflammatory treatment such as phenylbutazone (bute) and topical anti-inflammatory gels can be useful in the early stages.
- Excessive joint fluid can be drained followed by an injection of hyaluronic acid and/or steroid anti-inflammatory into the joint. A support bandage is put on the hock for 2 – 3 weeks to stop the joint from re-filling. This treatment can be repeated if the bog spavin returns, but some horses do not respond and the swelling quickly returns.
- Osteoarthritis can be treated with anti-inflammatory medication administered into the joint.
- Osteochondrosis (OCD) and chip fractures can be treated with arthroscopy (key hole surgery) to remove areas of damaged or loose joint cartilage or bone.
- If vitamin and/or mineral deficiencies are present these need to be corrected. Calcium, phosphorus, Vitamin A and Vitamin D deficiencies are thought to cause bog spavin in some cases.



ARTHROSCOPY CAN BE USEFUL IN THE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF SOME CAUSES OF BOG SPAVIN

PREVENTION

Prevention of bog spavin is difficult since the mechanism is poorly understood in many cases, but choosing not to breed from horses with very straight hocks may help to reduce the risk.



X-RAY SHOWING A LARGE CHIP FRACTURE IN THE HOCK JOINT WHICH WAS THE UNDERLYING CAUSE OF BOG SPAVIN IN THIS HORSE



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