



Equine Cushings Disease

(Pars Pituitary Intermedia Dysfunction or PPID)

What is it?

An adenoma (tumour) in a part of the brain known as the pituitary gland. The pituitary gland is responsible for the production and stimulation of many important hormones, most importantly dopamine. In the horse with Equine Cushings Disease, dopamine levels are reduced, causing a hormonal imbalance.

What does a horse with Equine Cushings Disease look like?

- Long hair coat, however only in ~60-70% of cases
- Excessive drinking/urination
- Poor body condition
- Lethargic
- Sore footed or prone to laminitis



How can we diagnose Equine Cushings Disease?

By taking a blood sample and testing for elevated ACTH.

The horse must be fasted over night for the test to be accurate.

What is the treatment?

If your horse has clinical signs of Equine Cushings Disease, has laminitis and has an elevated ACTH blood test, a daily dose of pergolide can control the effects of a decrease in dopamine caused by the tumour. The effects of pergolide can take up to one month to see the full effect.

How to manage a horse with Equine Cushings Disease and Laminitis?

- Start on pergolide and assess the response of the drug by the clinical improvement in the laminitic episode and by re-testing the ACTH level
- Reduce the access to sugars in the diet
- Work with your veterinarian and farrier, along with x-rays of all 4 feet to determine a therapeutic shoeing plan.

