**PRE-DISPOSING FACTORS OF EQUINE LAMENESS:**

Factors that predispose horses to lameness include physical immaturity, which may occur in premature or dysmature foals, and training older foals before maturity. This is especially observed in horses with genetic conditions.

Other factors include preexisting developmental orthopedic disease (eg, osteochondrosis, flexural limb and angular limb deformities); poor conformation; improper hoof balance or shoeing; failure to adequately condition performance horses; monotonous repetitive stresses on bones, tendons, ligaments, and joints in performance horses; hard, slippery, or rocky surfaces upon which horses work; and extremely athletic activities.

Inciting factors in lameness include direct or indirect trauma, fatigue resulting in incoordination of muscles (which often occurs in racehorses at the end of races), inflammation, infection, and failure to recognize early disease before it creates significant pain.

Lameness in one part of a limb often results in secondary soreness in another area of the same limb and may result in lameness of the contralateral forelimb or hindlimb from overuse due to compensation. The entire horse should be evaluated for secondary lameness even when the cause of the primary problem is obvious.

Secondary lamenesses are very common in performance horses but may occur in all types of horses. A dramatic example of a secondary lameness occurs when biomechanical laminitis develops in the normal contralateral limb of a horse with limited weight bearing from a severe orthopedic problem causing shifting of weight from the injured limb to the normal limb.