

## **PREVENTION**

There are several ways in which an owner, working in conjunction with his/her vet, can prevent equine lameness, ensuring that their horse remains sound. These include:

- Early diagnosis of disease in areas of the leg, foot and/or hoof, such as in the articular cartilage and subchondral bone; it is critical for prevention or retardation of the osteoarthritic process. Also important is recognition of subchondral bone disease before it becomes a fracture or catastrophic injury.
- Proper, timely shoeing (every 6-8 weeks) as well as provision of proper daily hoof care and trimming.
- Work footing which is deep enough to lessen concussion but not so deep that it strains tendons or ligaments.
- Stall footing which is level and dry with adequate bedding.
- Ensuring that saddle fit is correct and make sure tack fits properly.
- Checking legs and feet before and after every ride for any abnormalities in gait and/or stance etc.
- Careful conditioning, as well as regular long, slow distance work like walking to help keep tendons and ligaments tight and healthy.
- Feeding balanced rations containing calcium, biotin and the essential amino acid DL-methionine in adequate amounts for the horse's age, breed, physiological condition, workload and sex, as excess weight stresses joints, tendons, and ligaments.
- Plenty of safe, preferably solitary turnout, like a small, mud-free, well-fenced paddock, with the horse wearing protective boots.
- Ten to fifteen-minute warm-up/cool-down, such as an active, stretching walk before and a nice, easy walk on a loose rein after exercise.
- Avoidance of pounding and/or endless circling, round-pen work or lunging which can cause injury.
- Leg protection such as polo wraps which provide good support and protection when applied properly.

- Supplements.
- Alternative therapies; for example, chiropractic, massage and acupuncture therapy.

There has also been some interesting work done in the field of early diagnosis of disease in areas of the leg, foot and/or hoof, such as in the articular cartilage and subchondral bone, such as gene chip microarray and joint modeling, which help screen for potential of injury, decreasing the likelihood of it occurring.