

Cambridge Equine Hospital

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Notes for Owners of Patients Referred for Lameness Investigation

When examining horses for lameness or gait abnormalities, it is important that they are shod if possible. If your horse has a long-standing lameness and has undergone a sustained period of box rest, please undertake some light exercise (where appropriate) under the guidance of your veterinary surgeon. This allows us to examine the horse when he or she is exhibiting signs of lameness. If you feel that the lameness is most apparent when the horse is ridden, please bring your tack and riding hat with you in case the clinicians would like to assess the horse under saddle. An investigation of lameness includes walking and trotting in-hand, followed by lunging on a soft surface in the indoor school and on a hard surface to better classify the lameness.

Once the lameness has been classified, the next step is to localise the source of the problem to a specific area. Local anaesthetic techniques are an integral part of diagnosing lameness and the vet may recommend that nerve or joint blocks be performed. These involve placing small amounts of local anaesthetic under the skin (nerve block) or directly into a joint (joint block) to attempt to desensitise the area causing pain and lameness. These blocks can take a considerable amount of time, depending on the number of blocks required before the affected area is identified. If it is possible to isolate the area causing lameness, that region is then investigated with diagnostic imaging, which typically consists of x-rays or ultrasonography.

We take a very thorough approach to lameness diagnosis, and as such, it is not our normal practice to radiograph or ultrasound patients without an accompanying lameness evaluation. In addition, it may be the case that we cannot complete the lameness diagnosis in one day, especially so in more complex cases. In this instance, we may ask that your horse is admitted to the hospital overnight. The minimum amount of time for an initial lameness investigation is at least 3 hours, so although you are more than welcome to wait at the hospital, many owners prefer to leave the horse with us for the day.

If there is anything that we do not explain fully or clearly during the course of your horse's lameness examination, please feel free to ask. We hope this information sheet will be helpful in explaining our general protocol. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us on: **01223 746571** or email: cambridgeequine@vet.cam.ac.uk
