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Press Release

Lameness Detected

In recent years MRI scanning, long used as a diagnostic technique in humans, has become available for horses as a routine procedure.

Technological advances have made it possible to obtain images without anaesthetics and with the horse standing to give a rapid and accurate diagnosis in over 90% of lameness cases.

MRI produces high quality images of bone and soft tissue in any part of the leg from the hoof to the tarsus/carpus to help identify the problem. Because the images aid rapid diagnosis, precise targeting for treatment is possible at an early stage.

So unlike more commonly used procedures MRI can eliminate the need for repeat tests or long rest periods before an outcome is reached.

The Process

MRI scanners use a strong magnetic field around the horse's leg and short pulses of radio waves to generate a weak radio echo that creates the image.

With the scanner relying on magnets, it is necessary to remove the two front or two hind metal shoes on your horse, depending on which leg is to be scanned.

The horse is sedated and walked to the MRI scanner and the problem leg is placed into the scanner. The vet then aligns the scanner with the area of injury and takes as many images as necessary to produce an accurate diagnosis.

The whole process will take around one to two hours, and the entire procedure causes your horse minimum stress.

Diagnosis is made in conjunction with the other information available on the case, and is usually available quickly.

Case Study:

When eight-year old Warmblood, Milly, became lame whilst showjumping, her vet was unable to make a diagnosis.

The lameness showed no signs of improvement after four weeks rest and coffin joint intra-articular therapy.

Milly was lame on her left front leg, but standard methods of radiographs and ultrasound of the palmar pastern failed to explain the lameness.

With conventional procedures producing no clear answer, an MRI scan was recommended to discover why the horse was lame. Using a Hallmarq standing equine HRI scanner a diagnosis was finally made of a complete rupture of the lateral collateral ligament in the front distal interphalangeal joint with associated secondary synovitis.

This detailed diagnosis allowed exact treatment to be prescribed. An injection of bone marrow stem cell was given. The horse was confined to a stable for 4 months to ensure correct healing, and to avoid any tension on the injured ligament she was shod with a wide lateral branch.

Milly's injury was hard to detect, but with the help of the MRI scanner, diagnosis was precise. The mare is now still resting but has greatly improved since the initial examination and is set to make a good recovery.

Hallmarq MRI scanners have imaged over 9,000 horses worldwide, and are only used at veterinary practices by trained veterinary staff.

For further information contact Hallmarq Veterinary Imaging on (01483) 877812 or visit www.hallmarq.net

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