

LAMENESS

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MVB, MRCVS

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To Sean, Michael, Paul and Allin

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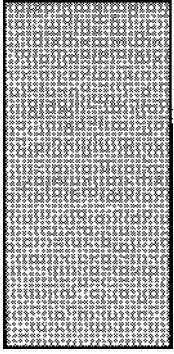
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Contents

INTRODUCTION vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ix

1 Causes of Lameness 1

Important Anatomical Points of the Horse 2 - Axial Forces 9 - Other Influences 10 - The Forelimb 12 - Surface Influences 17 - The Hind Limb 19

2 Diagnosis 21

History 21 - Locating the Limb Involved 22 - Examination 33
Surface and Gradient in Lameness 52 - Flexion Tests 52 - Nerve Blocks 54 - Examination of the Muscular System 54 - Back Manipulation 55 - Location of the Injured Area 56

3 Concussive Lameness 58

Carpal Injuries (Carpitis) 58 - Splints 61 - Sore and Bucked Shins 64
Sesamoiditis 67 - Villonodular Synovitis 69 - Ringbone 69 -
Navicular Disease 71 - Pedal Osteitis 74 - Sidebone 76 - Bone Spavin 78 - Subchondral Bone Cysts 81

4 The Foot 83

Anatomy of the Foot 83 - Conditions of the Foot 87

5 Constitutional and Developmental Lameness 104

Laminitis 104 - Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD) 108 - Epiphysitis 110

Exertional Myopathies 112 — Angular and Rotational Limb Deformities 114 — Flexural Deformities 118 — Nutritional Causes of Lameness 120

6 Lameness Related to Bursae, Sheaths, Tendons and Ligaments 121

Injury to Bursae and Sheaths 121 — Injuries to Tendons and Ligaments 127

7 Lameness Associated with Joints 147

Joint Anatomy 147 — Primary Joint Trauma (Sprain) 149 — Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD) 150 — Infectious Arthritis (Joint-ill in Foals) 152 — Individual Joints 154

8 The Nervous and Muscular Systems 168

The Vertebral Column 168 — The Voluntary Nervous System 171 — Natural Conformational Deviations of the Back 173 — Lameness of Spinal Origin 173 -- Other Neurological Problems 175 — The Muscular System 180 — Muscular Injury 182

9 Other Lamenesses 188

Upward Fixation of the Patella 188 — Luxation of the Patella 189
Filling in the Legs 190 — Lymphangitis 191 — Hereditary Multiple Exostosis 192 — Marie's Disease 192 — Osteomyelitis 193

10 Fractures 194

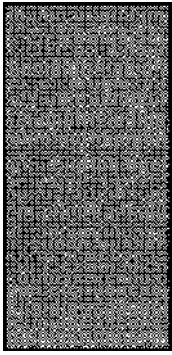
Fractures of Individual Bones 198

11 Shoeing and Faulty Action 203

Preparing the Feet of Young Animals 204 — Preparing the Feet of Adult Animals 205 — Shoe Types 207 — Faulty Action 218

12 Physiotherapy 220

Therapeutic Ultrasound 221 — Laser Therapy 224 — Faradic Therapy 224 — Pulsing Electromagnetic Fields 226 — Magnets 227



Introduction

The purpose of writing a book on lameness is to create a greater awareness of the subject and to present to everyone who rides or keeps horses the idea of the prevention of lameness. We who are in daily contact with horses are privileged, despite the drudgery involved and the material demands of a cost-consuming luxury. The prevention of lameness is, therefore, owed to the animal, but we also benefit from the potential elimination of the cost of treatment, or even the mere loss of use.

Prevention of lameness is not a new subject, but one broached repeatedly. It may well start with good shoeing and dedicated supervision of foot care, but it proceeds through understanding of conformation and anatomy, appreciation of the demands of physical development, the influence of concussion, and the working of systems such as the muscles, bones and particularly the spinal skeleton.

All of these aspects are highlighted in this book and it is my hope that they will become more widely understood. If that happens, the horse will also benefit and the whole exercise will have been worthwhile.

The basis of lameness prevention is as follows:

- 1) Foot and limb balance are essential to the prevention of sprains, strains and conditions such as angular deformity. Shoeing is an essential element of this.
- 2) The correct approach to concussion absorption can prevent the development of ringbone, sidebone, splints and spavin.
- 3) Constitutional lamenesses are prevented by proper feeding and an understanding of diet management (e.g. over-feeding of young animals may lead to osteochondritis; improper diet management can lead to azoturia).

- 4) Understanding the muscular system is a means of preventing not only muscular lameness but also secondary lameness resulting from it. It is also a significant factor in tendon injuries and is closely allied to lameness of spinal origin.
- 5) Early diagnosis and proper care of spinal origin lameness is best achieved on a regular preventive basis, especially in known sufferers.
- 6) Good shoeing is a basis for preventing a whole range of common modern lamenesses.

Approaching equine lameness from the viewpoint of cause and effect is a move away from the standard approach, which has been almost universally based on the hypothesis that the vast majority of lameness occurs in the areas from the knee to the ground in the forelimb and from the hock to the ground in the hind limb. Modern clinical experience, objectively assessed, has to take us to a wider understanding of the problem particularly as it affects the athletic animal. While no statistics are available to refute the old idea, there is adequate living proof that other sources of lameness (e.g. the muscular system and the skeleton) are all now common enough today to challenge that status.

Under the Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 1962, treatment of an animal by physiotherapy is permitted by a non-veterinarian as long as the animal has first been examined by a vet who referred it for such treatment. Physiotherapy, in this context, is taken to include all forms of manipulative therapy and there are no stipulations as to the qualifications to be held by such therapists. That there are is not good enough and it leaves the door open to all forms of clinical abuse; many people who attend horses unsupervised under the guise of 'physiotherapist' are without a basic understanding of the subject. Animals are made to suffer through human exploitation, and the situation demands redress.

Peter Gray



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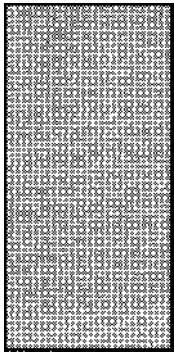
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Author Note

I have used everyday and common terms when naming parts of the horse. In veterinary practice, of course, technical names are used for greater accuracy of definition. Where it will aid the reader, therefore, I have occasionally used both in the text.



Index

- accessory carpal 60
acetabulum 165
Achilles tendon, rupture of 163
acute muscle injuries 22
angular limb deformities 114, 204
annular ligament 4, 41, 45, 131
 constriction of 40
 of carpal joint 44
anti-slipping devices 212
arthroscopy 61, 109
articular fracture 194
 ringbone 71
 windgalls 126, 158
atlas 168
atrophy 39, 40, 174, 183
Australian stringhalt 178
axial forces 9, 12, 19, 61, 79
axis 17, 168
azoturia 120
bench knee 17
bicipital bursitis 121, 161,
bone, ilium 8, 49
 large metacarpal 17, 45
 metacarpal 3, 44, 62
 metatarsal 62
 proximal sesamoid 43, 67,
 137, 199
 radial carpal 58
 small metacarpal 45
 tarsal 78
brucellosis 48, 123, 124
brushing 218, 220,
bucked shins 24, 39, 64
bursa 72, 121, 124
 bicipital 121
 false 121
 infected 123
 intertuberal 161
 non-infected 123
 trochanteric 121
 bursal enlargements 122
 bursitis 47, 121, 158
 buttress foot 101, 156
 calcaneus 78
 canker 97, 98
 cannon 3, 12, 14, 44, 56, 197,
 198
 capped elbow 47, 122, 160
 hock 122, 163
 carpal bones 199
 canal 129
 injuries (carpitis) 3, 58
 sheath 46, 146
 tunnel 145, 146
 carpus valgus 115, 118
 carpus varus 115
 cartilage 17, 33, 148,
 centre of gravity 2
 cervical vertebrae 168
 chronic joint disease 152
 club foot 102
 coccygeal vertebrae 171
 cold swellings 22
 collagen 130
 collateral ligaments 150
 concussion 1, 3, 9, 17, 19, 44
 conformation 1, 3, 4, 10, 11,
 46
 copper deficiency 120
 corns 30, 57, 89, 156
 coronary band 84, 86, 94, 99,
 106
 cushion 84, 86
 cow hocks 79
 cross-firing 219
 crural nerve paralysis 179
 curb 121, 139, 140, 141, 163
 deep flexor muscle 129
 tendon 67, 129
 degenerative joint disease
 (DJD) 44, 51, 60, 150, 151,
 155, 157, 159, 160, 161,
 163, 165, 198 (*see also*
 osteoarthritis)
 desmitis 136
 developmental deformities 159,
 163, 174
 digital cushion 17, 86
 extensor 101
 sheath 41, 42, 129
 dipped back 49
 displacement (hock) 135
 distal sesamoid (navicular)
 bone 129, 200
 sesamoidean ligament,
 sprain of 141
 dropped elbow 178
 shoulder 179
 sole 91
 dumping 17
 elbow 47, 56
 endotendon 130
 epiphysitis 44, 110, 112, 115,
 158, 159
 equine viral arteritis (EVA) 190
 exertional myopathy (azoturia)
 112, 120
 Faradism 33, 49, 55, 113, 184,
 225, 226
 faulty action 202, 219
 femur 7, 198
 fetlock 4, 11, 14, 17, 43, 143
 joint capsule 43
 fibrotic myopathy 185
 fibula 198
 filling in legs 190
 first phalanx 199
 fistulous withers 48, 123
 flexion tests 53, 54
 flexural deformities 118, 11
 forging (clicking) 218, 219
 foot 2, 4, 15, 16, 33, 57, 83,

- 86, 87, 93, 94
 contracted 88
 foot/pastern axis 4, 17
 forearm 3, 12, 47
 fracture 8, 33, 47, 62, 158,
 159, 160, 165, 194, 198,
 201
 displaced 196
 slab 198
 long bone 198
 pelvic 198, 200
 frog 14, 17, 34, 84, 85, 96, 97
 pressure 89
 supports 218
 galls 48
 gaskin 51
 gastrocnemius muscle, rupture
 of 187
 grasscrack 95
 grooving 78, 95
 ground, conditions of 1, 21, 203
 heel 14, 17, 84
 hereditary multiple exostosis
 192
 high heel/short toe 61
 high ringbone 3, 41, 69, 70, 156
 hip 6, 52, 57, 165
 history 21
 hock (tarsus) 5, 12, 19, 20, 57,
 124, 140, 162, 201
 joint 78, 141
 hoof 34, 83, 105
 tester 34
 horny frog 85
 humerus 13, 199
 hygroma of knee 121, 159
 idiopathic synovitis 126
 infection of foot 1, 33, 43, 90,
 93, 95, 137, 222
 infectious arthritis 152
 insensitive foot 83
 laminae 84, 86, 105
 intertuberal bursa 161
 intervertebral discs 7
 joint-ill 152, 153
 joints, arthroidal 7, 153, 154,
 159
 ball-and-socket 154, 160, 165
 capsule 149, 150, 151
 carpometacarpal 159
 coffin 4, 41, 83, 87, 155
 diarthroidal 154, 166
 dislocation of 150, 166
 enarthrosis 154
 femoropatellar 165
 femorotibial 165
 ginglymus (hinge) 5, 154,
 155, 156, 157, 159, 162,
 164
 intercarpal 58, 158
 intertarsal 162
 lumbosacral 171
 pastern 41, 69
 radiocarpal 58, 112, 158
 sacroiliac 5, 6, 166, 171
 synovial 154
 tarsometatarsal 78, 162
 tibiotarsal 162
 trochoid 154
 keratoma 94, 99, 156
 knee (carpus) 3, 12, 13, 14, 17,
 18, 46, 56, 61, 158
 backward deviation of 19
 lameness, acute 106
 concussive 30, 58
 muscular 29
 secondary 9, 32, 33, 226
 spinal origin 6, 20, 48, 173
 supporting-leg 25, 28, 30, 47,
 63, 184
 swinging-leg 25, 28, 30
 source of 22, 120
 laminae 105
 laminar corium 86
 laminitis 33, 85, 92, 104, 107,
 156
 chronic 93, 106, 107, 156
 toxic 105
 laser therapy 225
 lateral cartilages 76, 77, 78, 86,
 98, 99
 lateral grooves (sulci) 97
 ligaments
 collateral 149
 cruciate 165
 inferior check 45, 119, 129
 interosseus 160
 radial check 129, 138
 round 165
 sesamoidean 41, 157
 subcarpal 129
 subtarsal check 162
 superior check 129
 suspensory 13, 129, 137
ligamentum nuchae 123, 168
 liquid nitrogen 66
 long bone fractures 198
 long toe/low heel 14, 61
 low ringbone 33, 41, 42, 69,
 71, 101, 155
 lumbar vertebrae 170
 lumbosacral articulation 171
 luxation 167
 of patella 189
 lymphangitis 42, 191
 magnets 152, 227
 manipulation 6, 55, 220
 Marie's disease 192
 massage 220, 221
 medial patellar ligament,
 section of 189
 menisci (discs) 165
 metacarpus 17, 115
 Monday morning disease 112
 muscle
 atrophy of 174
 skeletal 180
 smooth 180
 spasm 48, 174
 type of 180, 182
 muscular
 injuries 11, 47, 48, 52
 system 1, 9, 54, 179
 navicular bone 13, 69, 87, 96,
 129, 200
 disease 3, 57, 71, 73, 155
 neck 2, 48
 nerve blocks 54
 nervous system 168
 nuchal crest 168
 nutritional secondary hyper-
 parathyroidism 120
 open knees 47
 ossification of cartilage 76, 78
 osteoarthritis 44, 150 (*see also*
 degenerative joint disease)
 osteochondritis dissecans
 (OCD) 108, 109, 120, 158,
 159, 160, 161, 163, 165,
 176
 osteodystrophia fibrosa (bran
 disease) 120
 osteomyelitis 193
 overreach 219
 paratendon 131
 pastern 4, 12, 13, 15, 16, 41,
 57, 69
 patellar fixation 51, 188, 200
 pedal bone (third phalanx) 3,
 86, 87, 90, 96, 99, 156
 osteitis 3
 pelvis 5, 6, 8, 20
 perioplic ring 84, 86
 peritendon 130
 physiotherapy 6, 220
 physitis 44, 110, 115
 plantar ligament of the hock
 139
 point of hock 50, 123
 poll evil 123
 primary joint trauma 149
 muscle injury 175, 182, 183,
 186
 pulsing electromagnetic fields
 226
 pyramidal disease 156
 pyramidal process 101

230 Lameness

- quarters 20, 84
- quittor 98, 99
- radial paralysis 178
- radius 3, 17, 199
- reciprocal apparatus 5, 186
- reflex arcs 172
- ricketts 120
- ringbone 3, 39, 41, 56, 69
- roach back 49
- rotational limb deformities 114
- sacrum 6, 8, 49, 170, 201
- sandcrack 94
- scapula 12, 13, 183, 199
- scintigraphy 198
- second phalanx 69, 86, 200
- secondary muscle damage 183
- seedy toe 85, 93
- sensitive foot 86, 88, 97, 105
 - frog 86
 - laminae 86, 105
 - sole 30, 34, 86, 91, 92, 97, 156
- separation of radius and ulna 160
- sesamoiditis 3, 43, 67, 73, 158
- set-fast 112
- shivering 176
- shoeing 1, 203
- shoes 30, 34
 - feathered 210
 - heart-bar 217
 - leather pads 92, 212
 - plastic 92, 213, 214, 215, 216
 - racing plates 207, 214
 - seated-out 92
 - studs 213
 - threequarter 209
 - tips 211
 - types of 207
- wedge-heeled 211
- wedge-shaped plastic pads 212
- short toe/high heel 14
- shoulder 13, 47, 56, 160
- sickle hocks 79
- sidebone 33, 76, 78, 156
- skull 168
- sole 84, 85
- sore shins 3, 39, 40, 45, 52, 56, 64, 66
- spavin, bog 50, 81, 124, 163
 - bone 24, 50, 78
 - high 81
 - jack 81
 - occut (blind) 51
- speedy-cutting 218
- spinal nerves 25, 172
- spine 7, 25
- splint bone 45, 199
- splints 3, 45, 52, 56, 61, 63, 64, 159
- split pastern 199
- spondylosis 7
- stay apparatus 45, 137, 188
- stifle 5, 6, 20, 51, 57, 164
- strapping 220
- stride, length of 29
- stringhalt 176
- subchondral bone cysts 81, 165
- subluxation 167
- suprascapular paralysis 179
- suspensory apparatus 4, 68
- sweeny 179
- synovial fluid 148, 149, 152, 154
 - membrane 121, 149
 - sac 163
- synovitis 145
- tail 9
- talus 78
- tarsal bones 78
- tendinous windgalls 126, 158
- tendon, common digital
 - extensor 42, 87
 - contraction of 103, 119
 - deep flexor 4, 41, 45, 51, 67, 68, 87, 106, 129
 - digital extensor 101
 - navicular 72
 - repair of 132
 - rupture to 132
 - sheath 124, 125, 131
 - strained 132
 - structure of 130
 - superficial flexor 4, 41, 45, 67, 133
- tetanus 91, 96
- therapeutic ultrasound 221
- third phalanx (*see* pedal bone)
- thoracic vertebrae 169
- Thoroughbreds, laminitis in 108
- thoroughpin 51, 124, 163
- thrush 97, 98
- tibia 7
- toe 17, 84, 206, 210
- tracking up 29
- trauma 1, 10, 165
- tying up 112
- ultrasound, risks of 222
 - uses of 224
- upward fixation of patella 51, 188
- vertebral column 168
- villonodular synovitis 69, 158
- voluntary nervous system 172
- white line 85, 93, 96
- windgalls 43, 126
- withers 48
- wobbler 25, 175