



## Cushing's Disease ( PPID)

PPID is a common degenerative endocrine (hormonal) disorder in older horses, also known as Equine Cushing's Disease. It results from an enlargement of the pituitary gland, leading to the overproduction of ACTH, which causes excessive Cortisol production. Symptoms can include a long or abnormal hair coat, increased thirst and urination, laminitis, colic and muscle wastage. Many horses with PPID also have abnormal glucose (sugar) and fat metabolism; this is referred to as "insulin dysregulation also called Equine metabolic syndrome.

### Diagnosis

Most animals are over 15 years old when diagnosed but can occur in younger horses, horses and ponies of any breed may be affected. A simple blood test checking for the levels of ACTH can confirm the suspicion, for horses with more subtle clinical signs, sometimes called "early" PPID, ACTH can remain normal and dynamic tests may be needed to uncover abnormal hormonal responses caused by PPID. These tests include the overnight dexamethasone suppression test and thyrotropin releasing hormone stimulation test which evaluate the pituitary gland's ability to respond to administration of these agents.

Because many horses with PPID also have insulin dysregulation increasing the risk of laminitis, screening for PPID should also include testing for insulin dysregulation. Blood biochemistry analysis is also recommended as part of the overall geriatric wellness evaluation.

### Treatment

Pergolide mesylate is a drug that acts on receptors within the pars intermedia to suppress tissue enlargement and tumor growth.

Changes to diet may be needed, especially when insulin dysregulation is also present. Many older horses with PPID have difficulty maintaining weight, and it is essential for dental abnormalities to be addressed and nutritional needs to be met. Even with good dental care, elderly horses eventually wear their teeth to the point that hay can no longer be chewed. In these cases, pelleted senior feeds are effective for maintaining or gaining weight. If needed, fat supplements can be added to provide extra calories for horses that need to gain weight. For horses with insulin dysregulation, dietary sugar restriction is also needed and can be done by eliminating grain and limiting pasture access

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