

Overview

Goats have evolved on long, low-quality, high fibre food, bushels, and low hanging branches. Their systems are simply not set up to deal well with short, lush green grass. When grazed on short, lush grass, we can see goats go down with a number of issues, one of which is a painful condition of the feet called Laminitis. This condition is common in pet goats and always requires veterinary help.

Laminitis means “inflammation of the laminae”, which is a velcro-like tissue that holds the hoof wall to the underlying bone. Laminitis can have a particular look but is often confused with other conditions. Laminitis may be a sudden flare-up, or ongoing.

Causes & Symptoms

Laminitis is most commonly caused by excessive carbohydrates such as:

- Too many grains
- Feeding treats such as bread and biscuits
- Sudden onset of lush, sugary pasture

However, a sudden onset may also be due to an underlying inflammatory disease such as gut disease, mastitis, metritis or septicaemia.

Symptoms include

- Pain in the feet. Usually both front feet, but can include just one, or all four
- Shifting weight between the feet, a sign of pain in multiple feet
- Eating on the knees, progressing to reluctance to stand
- A rocking-horse stance, rocking back on the heels, to take weight off the toes
- Grinding of the teeth - a common pain behavior
- “Platform soles” - tall, hard soles, which are long-term changes



GOATS: A GUIDE TO Laminitis

- When very severe, the hoof will start falling off. This requires euthanasia

Management/ Prevention/ Treatment

A vet exam will involve taking the temperature and pulse of the feet and checking for other tell-tale signs at trimming. They will advise treatment and provide anti-inflammatory pain relief. Not only do they require pain relief, but reducing the inflammation is crucial to saving the feet. A vet check is also essential to check for any underlying health concerns that may have triggered the laminitis.

Laminitis is incredibly painful and left untreated causes long-term damage to the hoof that can be hard to come back from!

Prevention

- **Treat any underlying disease**
You will need your vet to diagnose the cause
- **Correct the feeding practices**
Put the goat on a reduced carbohydrate diet, by removing it from grain and lush grass, and feeding only hay. No bread, grain, molasses, etc. Once the condition

is corrected, you may slowly reintroduce it back onto the grass, but goats should always have access to hay to fulfill their high fibre requirements.

- **A comfy bed and rest**

Their activity should be restricted while they are in a painful phase. A nice deep bed of cushy hay to stand on is going to help keep them comfortable.

- **Reduce the inflammation**

Taking down inflammation is crucial, and a vet can prescribe drugs to do so. You may also ice-bath or cold-hose the feet. For 20 minutes, twice a day and continue this for 7 days.

- **Therapeutic trimming**

Platform soles will need to be taken down in a staged approach, rather than all at once. If severe, the goat may require x-rays to know where the foot is sitting within the hoof capsule. The toes are left longer than usual and the heels lower, to allow her to take pressure off the painful toes.

When to call us

- Immediately in any case of sudden onset laminitis for drugs and a correct diagnosis

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