



# CRYOTHERAPY TREATMENT

An innovative way to combat laminitic hooves in donkeys.

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Cryotherapy, also known as cold therapy, is a smart and easy adjunct to treatment for donkeys with acute laminitis – a serious inflammation of the ‘laminae’.

The laminae are the sensitive soft tissue structures inside the hoof that join the pedal bone to the hoof wall.

As a result of laminitis, the pedal bone loses its support and becomes unstable – meaning the bone can rotate or move downwards within the hoof, causing pain and irreversible damage.

## WHAT CAUSES LAMINITIS?

- Access to too much grass
- Access to cereal or other sugar-rich feed
- Endocrine (hormonal) conditions
  - Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) is a condition likened to type 2 diabetes in humans as it involves insulin regulation. EMS is commonly linked to laminitis.
  - Pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID) or ‘Cushing’s disease’ involves excessive production of hormones, caused by a benign enlargement of the pituitary gland in the brain. Increased levels of hormones in circulation have effects all over the body, including making these donkeys more susceptible to laminitis
  - **See our [Endocrine disorders in donkeys](#) for more information.**
- Severe lameness in one foot can cause excess weight to be taken on the opposite foot. This is known as ‘overload laminitis’

- A serious infection which leads to sepsis as bacteria enters the blood stream eg pneumonia (chest infection)
- A serious inflammatory illness such as colitis (inflammation of the gut)
- Stress, something which donkeys are extremely susceptible to. Causes of stress can include travel, changes in management and the loss of a companion.).

## OUR FINDINGS

Our veterinary teams have a holistic approach to managing laminitis with pain relief, hoof support, nutritional advice, and immediate management changes. With the clever use of cold therapy, our veterinary teams are seeing fantastic results in helping reduce the discomfort affected donkeys face.

Cryotherapy is a medical therapy that utilises low temperatures to help reduce the inflammation brought on by laminitis.

Originally, the process was used to treat laminitis in horses, but the proven results of the therapy have seen it implemented at The Donkey Sanctuary.

It has been particularly useful when the first signs of acute laminitis present themselves in our donkeys.

The therapy can begin quickly with our Brookfield donkey hospital, just a short distance from our Sidmouth sanctuary and other farm sites.

Up to three members of our veterinary team are required to run the therapy. One person helps keep the donkey calm and relaxed while the other staff members treat the affected hooves.

Animals with acute laminitis normally show good improvement of their lameness after their first day on ice. However, it is recommended to continue this treatment for longer in conjunction with other medication, normally anti-inflammatories.

## MORE INFORMATION

If you need clinical and dental veterinary advice contact our [veterinary team](#)