



Equine Arthritis (DJD)

What is equine arthritis?

DJD (degenerative joint disease) describes a process in the joint where the joint cartilage is progressively destroyed and changes occur in the associated bones and soft tissues.



Is it common in horses?

DJD is a very common problem affecting many horses, especially senior horses. It can be a painful disease that causes inflammation within the joint and commonly affects hocks, pasterns, front fetlocks, and coffin joints although any joint may be affected.



Signs of DJD

- Lameness
- Reluctance to work
- A change in behaviour
- Stiffness
- Muscle wastage
- Effusion (swelling) of the joints
- Reluctance to lift limbs for farrier



How is DJD diagnosed?

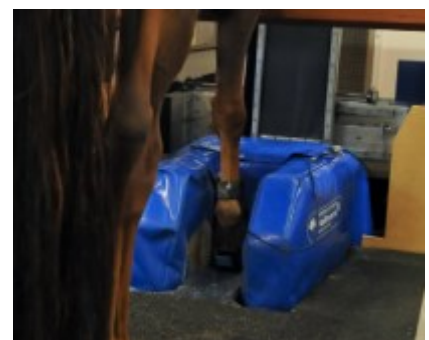
- Clinical examination
- Flexion tests
- Nerve blocks
- Radiographs

Further diagnostics:

- MRI
- Scintigraphy (BSC)
- Arthroscopy



This radiograph shows osteophytes caused by DJD on the horse's pastern



A horse's foot in an MRI scanner



Kings Bounty Equine Practice Client Fact Sheet

DJD can't be reversed so good management is essential to keep the horse comfortable and reduce the pain.

How is DJD managed?

- Managing the horse's weight is essential. Overweight horses put additional strain on their joints
- If possible, gentle and regular exercise can be beneficial
- Regular turnout to keep your horse moving
- Good farriery is essential
- A joint supplement can help to manage DJD (ask your vet for advice on the best one)
- Anti-inflammatory drugs, prescribed by your vet, can help to reduce the pain
- Intra-articular medication (medications injected into the joint)
- Other systemic medications such as bisphosphonates or pentosan polysulphate

