



Information Leaflet No. 4

HEEL PAIN

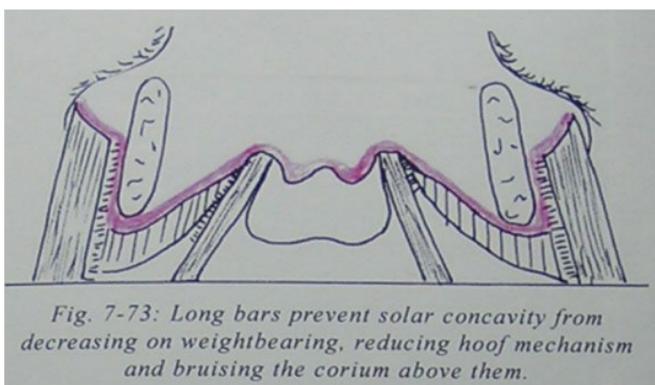
The majority of lameness problems in the horse originate in the front feet which bear most of the static load and impact forces. Heel pain is one of the most common causes of lameness, especially in sport horses. It commonly affects horses in their prime, i.e. between 7 and 15 years of age. Heel pain is variously described as 'navicular disease', 'navicular syndrome', 'sore heel syndrome'.

Conventional approaches variously attribute it to breed, genetics, hoof and/or conformational abnormalities and cannot agree upon a cause of this 'set of symptoms'. In conventional therapies there is no cure, only palliative, symptomatic treatments which at best delay the inevitable - premature retirement or death.

The Strasser Approach

Most heel pain is due to the bruising and inflammation of the corium in the region of the navicular bone as a result of the unnatural forces exerted on it by long bars. As such it is easily cured by removing shoes, corrective trimming and natural lifestyle.

The bars of the foot are part of the hoof wall which is harder horn than the sole. If the bars are too long, especially if they are the same level as the wall, they prevent the solar vault from drawing flat and they **bear weight for longer and more intensively than they are meant to.**



The resultant pressure is directed up into the hoof bruising the bar and sole corium. This situation is compounded if the heels are long, as they lever even short bars into the hoof. The hard edge of the bars forces the sole upwards against

the area between the frog and sole corium. (A low heel / long toe conformation can also cause this as the bars are pulled inward and downward by unnatural lever forces.)

When the hoof bears weight, the deep digital flexor tendon (DDFT) and navicular bone descend against this area (the sole is unable to draw away because the solar vault is kept pushed high by the bars). The corium in this region is pinched between the edge of the sole and the DDFT and navicular bone and may become inflamed and painful.

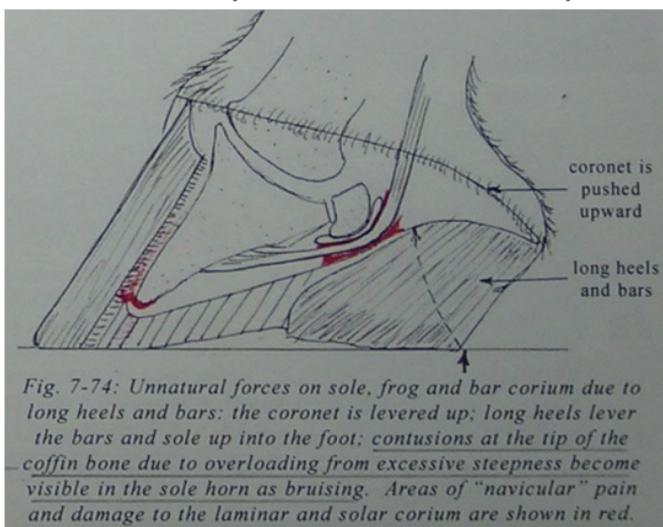


Fig. 7-74: Unnatural forces on sole, frog and bar corium due to long heels and bars: the coronet is levered up; long heels lever the bars and sole up into the foot; contusions at the tip of the coffin bone due to overloading from excessive steepness become visible in the sole horn as bruising. Areas of "navicular" pain and damage to the laminar and solar corium are shown in red.

The resulting pressure also pinches the arteries that supply the frog corium (leaflet 10) irritates the DDFT and navicular bursa.

If the heels are high enough, the steep alignment of the foot bones pinches the digital arteries between the DDFT and the palmar processes. This disrupts blood flow to the frontal laminar corium but the heel is supplied by different arteries. Thus the horse feels its sore heels but not the damage being done to the laminar corium. This damage to the laminar corium sets the stage for founder. (Leaflet 5)

Congestion in the blood vessels above the constricted area causes them to enlarge and bone around them is removed - the 'holes' in the bone often visible on X-rays and mistakenly identified as the cause of lameness.

Shoes which touch the bar exert a constant pressure into the interior of the hoof making it impossible for the hoof to expand or function normally. The resultant reduction of circulation and loss of sensation can make a navicular horse appear sound for a while.

Further Information:

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