

BLEMISHES

D LEVEL

A blemish is a defect (lump, bump, scar, etc.) that detracts from a horse's appearance, but doesn't affect its soundness or usability. They can be caused by poor conformation, overwork, or injury. They are not desirable in certain types of show horses. They are usually permanent.

An unsoundness is an injury or condition that causes the horse pain or discomfort. Some unsoundnesses can turn into blemishes. An unsoundness can be chronic, which means it never really goes away. Some chronic conditions can be managed with special care and/or shoeing and trimming. The horse can be used with some types of unsoundnesses, but may need to have its workload reduced. Other unsoundnesses will require the horse be rested, either temporarily or permanently, and may require a period of stall rest.

SPLINT

Often starts as an unsoundness and ends up as a blemish.

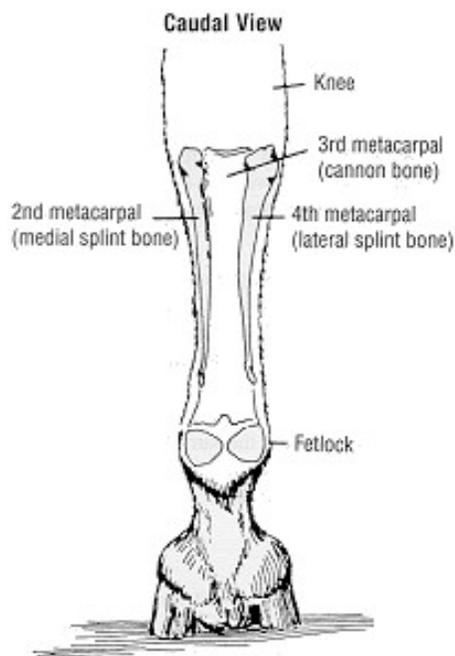


Figure 1

Splints is an ailment of the horse or pony, characterized by a hard, bony swelling, usually on the inside of a front leg, between the splint and cannon bone or on the splint bone itself.

RINGBONE

Ringbone is an unsoundness.



Ringbone is exostosis (bone growth) in the pastern or coffin joint of a horse. In severe cases, the growth can encircle the bones, giving ringbone its name.

Ringbone can be classified by its location, with "high ringbone" occurring on the lower part of the large pastern bone or the upper part of the small pastern bone. "Low ringbone" occurs on the lower part of the small pastern bone or the upper part of the coffin bone. High ringbone is easier seen than low ringbone, as low ringbone occurs in the hoof of the horse. However, low ringbone may be seen if it becomes serious, as it creates a bony bump on the coronet of the horse.

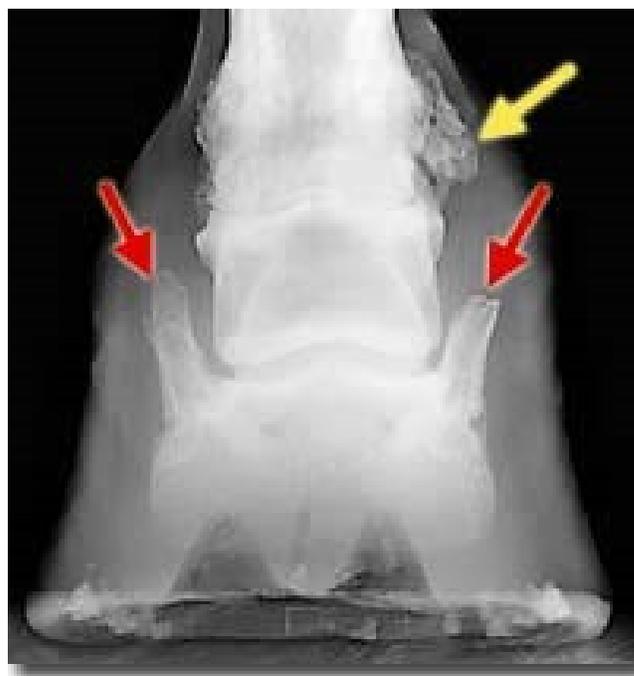
OSSELETS

Osselets start as an unsoundness, and may become a blemish.



SIDEBONE

Can be an unsoundness, and is rarely a blemish.



Osselets –yellow

Sidebone -red

Osselets

Osselets begin with injury to the front fetlock joint from repeated concussive forces . Horses with long or upright pasterns are predisposed to osselets.

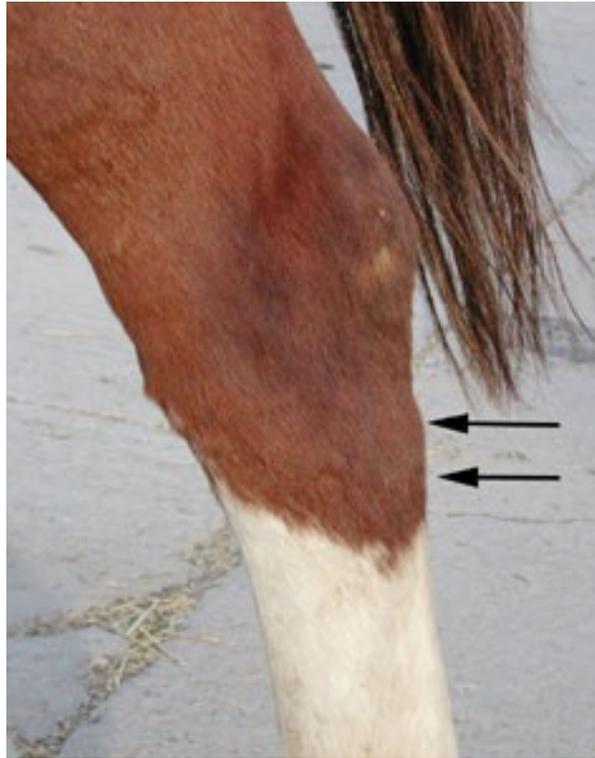
As the condition worsens, the joints become more irritated and extra bone begins to form. Ulcerated cartilage leads to recurring inflammation and the horse's performance deteriorates quickly if rest and treatment are not provided.

SIDEBONE

Sidebone is a common condition of horses, characterized by the ossification (hardening) of the collateral cartilages of the coffin bone. These are found on either side of the foot protruding above the level of the coronary band. The front feet are most commonly affected.

CURB

Starts as an unsoundness, usually ends up a blemish



CAPPED HOCK



Curb

Curb used to be defined as thickening of the long plantar ligament. However, curb has been redefined as a collection of soft tissue injuries of the distal plantar hock region (lower rear part of the hock). Curb is a useful descriptive term when describing swelling in this area.

Sickle-hocked conformation is a predisposing risk factor for the development of curb.

A **capped hock** refers to the presence of a swelling which forms over the point of the horse's hock due to the accumulation of inflammatory fluid in a membrane lined cavity called a bursa. The wall of the bursa may thicken with the formation of fibrous tissue due to the low-grade inflammatory reaction present .

CAUSES

Capped hocks occur most often when a horse or pony bangs its hocks against a stall wall, or while traveling in a trailer. They can also be caused by an injury such as a kick to the horse's hock.

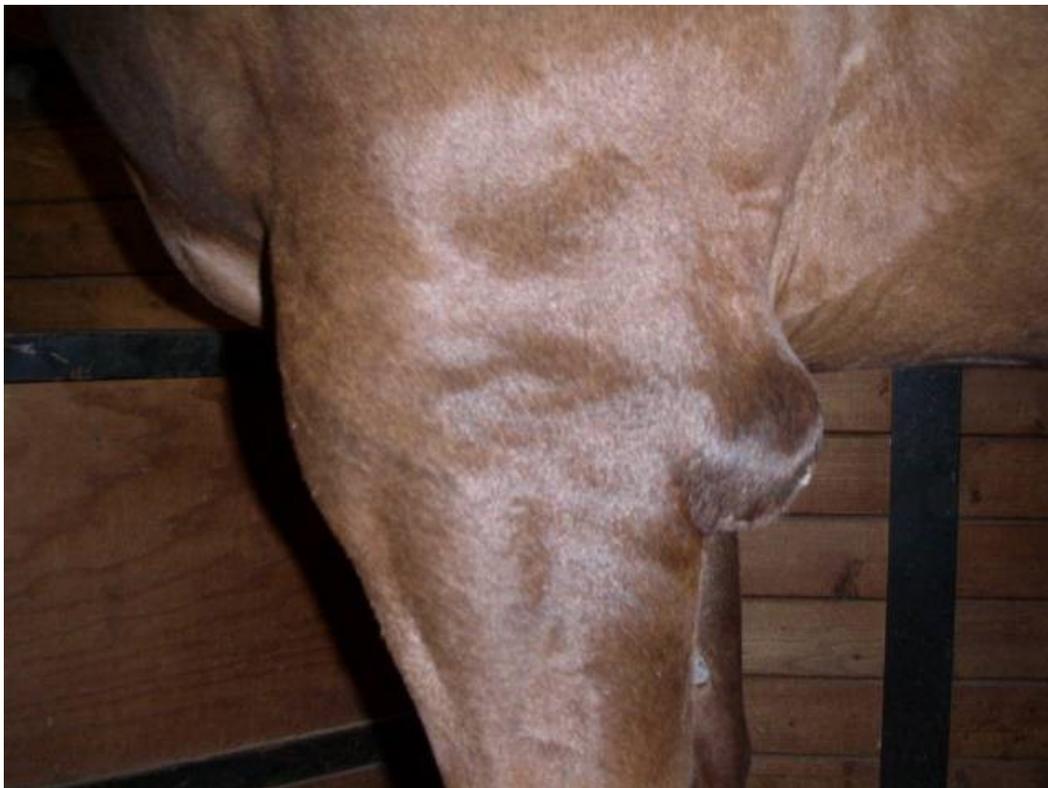
SHOE BOIL

It is an unsoundness



CAPPED ELBOW

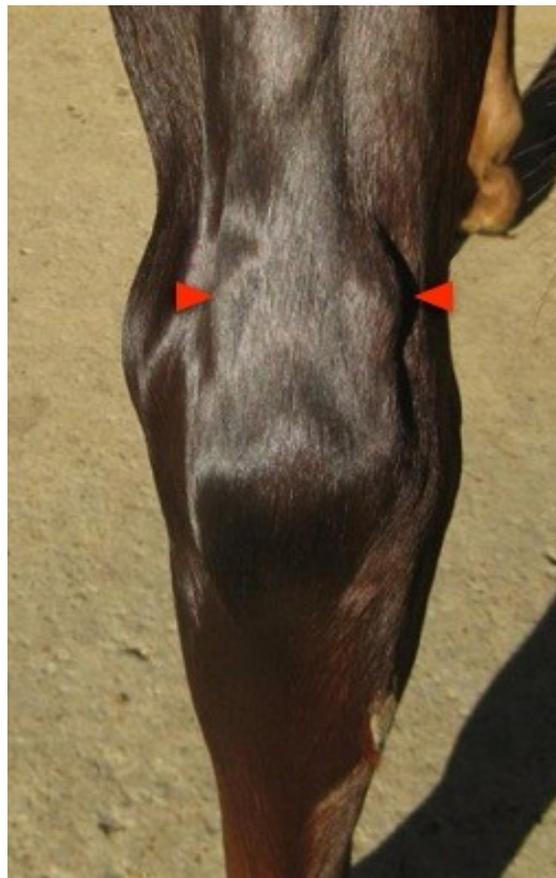
This is a blemish that a shoe boil turns into.



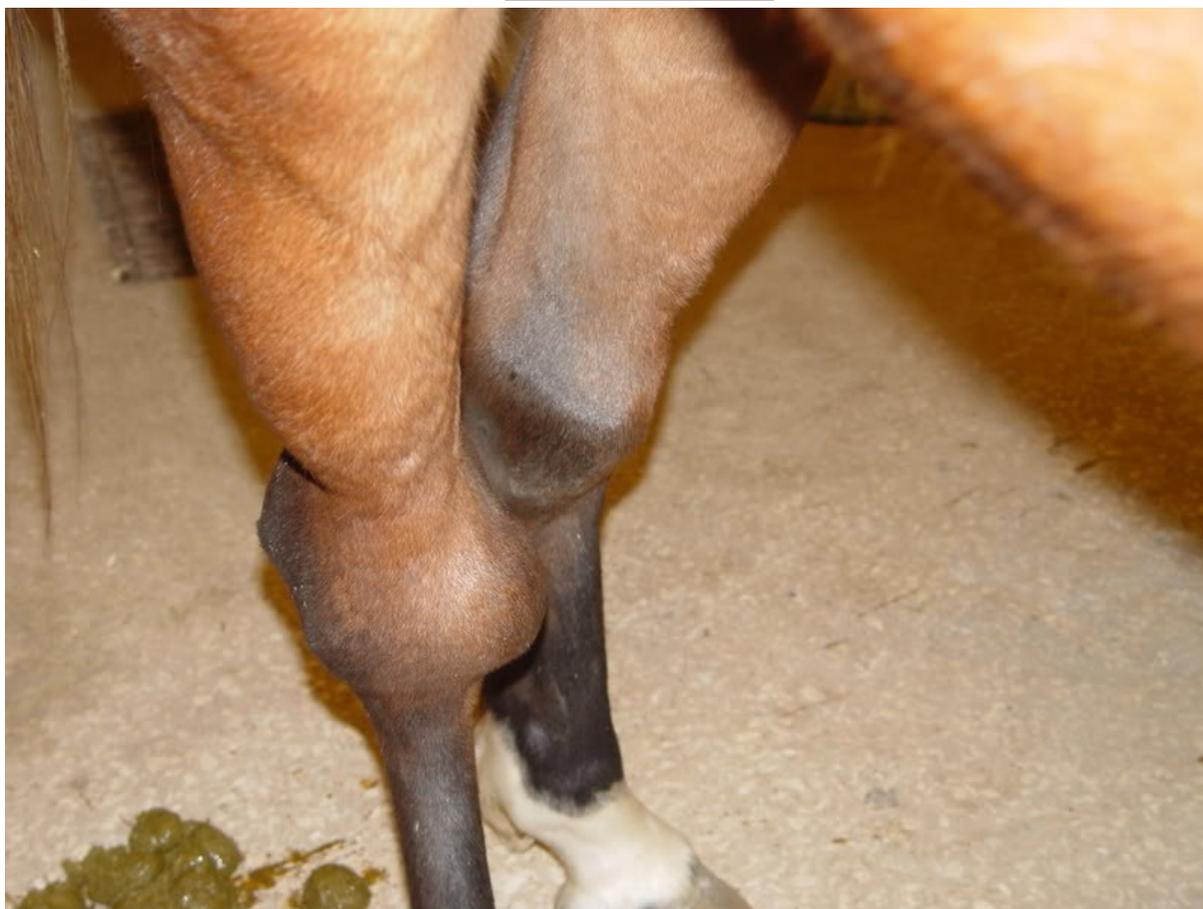
Shoe boil, capped elbow

Shoe boil and capped elbow, are terms that describe a movable swelling that can occur at the point of the elbow in the horse. It usually occurs as a result of trauma caused by the heel of the shoe hitting the point of the elbow while the horse is lying down. In gaited horses, occasionally the foot strikes the elbow while the horse is in motion.

THOROUGHPIN



BOG SPAVIN



Thoroughpin is a cosmetic blemish of the hock area that is similar to windpuffs of the ankles (fetlocks). Specifically, thoroughpin is swelling of the tendon sheath around the deep digital flexor tendon as it passes over the hock. This swelling is not accompanied by heat or pain, and it does not usually cause lameness.

Causes

Any horse with poor conformation in the hock region may be at risk for developing thoroughpin. In addition, a young horse just starting work as well as a horse in heavy work may also be at risk due to the added stress on the horse's legs.

Bog spavin is a condition where a soft swelling occurs on the medial surface of the hock joint resulting from excessive fluid within the joint capsule. It is usually seen as two distinct swellings, one on the back and the other on the front of the hock joint. Joint fluid in the top joint increases in the sac and pushes out so it is visible.

When a horse develops bog spavin, it is usually lame only if the condition is caused by stress. If caused by accidental trauma, the horse will be sound again as soon as the joint heals. Most bog spavins heal without treatment.

Symptoms

Soft swelling on the inside front of the hock with a smaller swelling on the outside

Lameness, although not always

Heat and pain if caused by stress

BONE SPAVIN



Bone spavin is a bony growth within the lower hock joint. It is caused by osteoarthritis, and the degree of lameness that results can be serious enough to end a horse's competitive career.

BOWED TENDON



Bowed tendon is the name for superficial or deep digital flexor tendonitis. The superficial digital flexor tendon (SDFT) runs down the back of the leg and attaches to the long and short pastern bones. The deep digital flexor tendon (DDFT) runs to the SDFT and attaches to the coffin bone. When either of these tendons becomes inflamed, it swells, causing it to look "bowed." The bow can appear anywhere from the knee or hock to the pastern region. Bowed tendons can occur as a result of chronic stresses on the flexor tendons or as a result of a single traumatic incident. Racehorses, polo ponies, and jumpers are at higher risk than other equine athletes for developing this condition. Placing bandages on the lower leg that put uneven pressure on the tendons can also lead to inflammation.

Bowed tendons can vary in severity, but because of the type of tissue involved in the injury, complete healing takes a long time. Symptoms may resolve within days if the horse is rested and given anti-inflammatory drugs (i.e. Bute), but generally return when the horse is returned to work. It can take 8 to 11 months for the tendon to repair itself completely.

PINFIRING MARKS



Pinfiring

Pin firing is a therapy that uses a small, red-hot probe to cause cauterization (burning) of tissue in horses with chronic injuries to produce an inflammatory process. Firing is done more often in racehorses than in other performance horses, and has been used for more than a century in conditions of recurring injuries such as a splints, curbs, or chronic bowed tendons. The idea behind firing is that it makes chronic inflammations acute and allows them to heal. The procedure is performed under sedation and local anesthesia, and the pain inflicted is fairly short-lived and usually well-tolerated by the patient.



WINDPUFFS OR WINDGALLS

Windpuffs is a term for extra synovial fluid in the fetlock area. It can occur in the front or hind legs, or both. Extra fluid results in a soft swelling behind and just above the fetlock joint. It is more common in older horses, but can occur at any age.

Lameness is rare except in severe cases (e.g. infection or tendon damage). Therefore, the problem is considered primarily cosmetic in nature. Consequently, most horses are left untreated.