



Improving Performance: Lameness and Joint injections



Lameness examination and Joint injection fees:

***Thorough lameness
examination and 4
standard X-ray images
\$300***

***Inject 2 joints with
hyaluronic acid (HA)
and triamcinalone
(cortisone) \$270***

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Lameness in racing Thoroughbreds can be a significant cause of reduced performance and lost training time. Recent studies have proven even a subtle lameness such as a grade 2 out of 5 lameness (i.e. inconsistently lame at the straight trot) can significantly reduce performance during a race. Reduced performance not only impacts on the trainer and owner but also punters. Recent studies have shown that horses that were either rested until the lameness resolved or underwent veterinary treatment for the cause of the lameness raced more predictably and significantly increased their race earnings at subsequent starts. While trainers are good judges of lameness in their horses, these subclinical lameness can be challenging to detect and diagnose. Often the best time to evaluate a horse for subclinical lameness is a few hours after fast work or racing. This way any area of soreness or weakness will have been placed under pressure and may be more readily detected. Apart from soft tissue causes of lameness such as muscle strains and bruising, degenerative joint disease or arthritis is probably the most insidious and common cause of lameness in high performance race horses. This comes about from repetitive wear and tear on the joint, particularly the cartilage. As yet there is no cure for arthritis, so early detection, prevention and management are important. The use of anti-inflammatory drugs such as cortisone and others like phenylbutazone can provide pain relief from arthritis and have been shown to significantly improve performance and run times in horses with fetlock arthritis for example. One study showed approximately 70-80% of treated horses improved performance and earnings after treating fetlock synovitis and or arthritis. For maximal response following treatment timing is of the utmost importance. As a general rule of thumb horses may take 3-4 weeks for maximal response to treatment. With many horses now coming into to work for carnival races, now is the time to start thinking about assessing horses for potential lameness problems thus enabling an appropriate management plan to be developed. There are various treatments available for medicating joints affected by arthritis, depending on severity of joint damage, racing schedule, swab times and economics. As such, costs will vary depending on individual circumstances, but generally we can provide appropriate advice and help design a treatment plan to suit most cases. As a guide injecting 2 joints with hyaluronic acid (HA) and triamcinalone (cortisone) would cost approximately \$270. The work level should generally be reduced after injecting the joints to allow the treatment to have an effect. This treatment is best carried out at least 10-14 days prior to racing to allow for a clinical benefit and comply with excretion times and the requirement for drug free racing. If you have any questions regarding the management of joint arthritis please don't hesitate to call Brad, Bruce or Ben at the Townsville Veterinary Clinic.