

Arthritis

When your wonderful friend starts showing signs of stiffness, what should you do? Call your veterinarian and have your horse carefully checked. X-rays may be needed to determine the extent of the damage. Often when arthritis is present in the front legs the back legs are not checked as carefully or x-rayed. It is very important to diagnose the type of arthritis you are dealing with and then determine with your vet the best course of action. Most forms of arthritis involve severe pain in the affected joint and reluctance to move or bend the limb. If the inflammation of the joint is recent there will be swelling and there may be heat. If the condition has been going on for some time the movement of a joint may be reduced. Severe or prolonged arthritis may cause the joint to solidify.

Sun Dance came to the sanctuary when she was 26 years old after being ground tied for 17 years. At some point in the horrific torture Sun Dance's back right fetlock joint was broken and healed in a solid mass. The prognosis was, "She will never get any better and can never be ridden. The joint was probably broken and just left to heal on its own." Three months later the same person had a chance to see Sun Dance being ridden at a slow canter around a field in perfect form. All signs of the atrophied joint were gone, and the size was normal with full range of movement. (A miracle, yes and we see many of them at the sanctuary.) As soon as Sun Dance trusted us, therapy was started on the joint. The joint area was washed with just fresh well water, dried and then DMSO was painted on to the area. After the first week the leg would be lifted, and gentle but firm pressure was applied to the joint to move it. In small increments the joint broke free and the full range of motion was restored. She was also given MSM every day. Sun Dance lived to be 36 years old and never had any further ill effects from the broken fetlock joint.

Only in the first stages of arthritis should a horse be confined to a stall. If you choose to confine your horse or retire him his arthritis will just worsen. All horses that can be ridden should be given light exercise. A horse should only be retired for extreme reasons, and we have some that will never be able to have even the lightest weight rider. Our veterinarian felt Cloud Dancer's front leg had been broken at the knee. From the information we could gather, this had accrued more than a year before he arrived at HPS's sanctuary. The knee had built up deposits the size of softball, and Cloud was in extreme pain. Within a relatively short amount of time the deposit went down to the size of a goose egg and has remained this way. Cloud Dancer can now run and buck with the other horses, but he will never carry any weight on his back. DMSO is used regularly on his knee and he receives MSM supplement. If Cloud had been treated when the injury had occurred, he may have had a full recovery.

Chief at 31 years old looked and acted his age. His previous owners seldom rode Chief and when they did it was necessary to give him Bute first. A good balanced diet can do wonders by itself in some cases. Chief shows no signs of having arthritis and it was due mainly to proper diet and light exercise. Studies have shown that the use of Bute for more than 5 days can cause stomach lining damage and ulcers.

There are many fine supplements on the market today for arthritis. HPS still finds MSM and DMSO the best for most horses. In extreme cases we will use Adequan TM