Chronic Long Term Laminitis

- Rings...any rings...are BAD!
- If rings wider at the heel – definitely laminitis.
- Doesn’t like one front foot picked up
- If digital pulse at all felt...IMMEDIATELY stable, get off all grain & any form of pellet and URGENTLY ring the University Veterinarian.
- Probably occasional head nod at trot.
- Might stand wider than normal
- Warm feet – URGENTLY ring vet
- Seems ‘tired’ or lazy

Laminitis is a common, painful and potentially DISASTROUS condition of the horse’s foot whereby there is a severe inflammatory process in the sensitive laminae of the hoof. These laminae are the structures which maintain the integrity of the foot and which bind the pedal bone (also called the coffin bone, distal phalanx or P3) to the hoof capsule.

When these laminae become inflamed in laminitis, they usually suffer from a decrease in their blood supply, causing them to die back. This dying back of the laminae means that they are no longer capable of maintaining the pedal bone in its normal position. The combined weight of the horse and the pull of the deep digital tendon which inserts onto the pedal bone, causes the pedal bone to rotate. In very acute cases the inflammation may be so dramatic that all the laminae may be compromised to such an extent that the entire pedal bone sinks downwards into the hoof capsule (sinker or founder).

As expected this whole process is EXTREMELY PAINFUL and often career ending if not a life threatening condition, and thus requires IMMEDIATE VETERINARY ATTENTION.

Causes...
Laminitis is often the end stage manifestation of many disease processes and therefore there are many causes or instigating factors:

- Feeding carbohydrates: feeding of grain \ lush pasture\spring pasture. Sometimes even just a handful!
- Gastrointestinal problems, particularly after severe colic
- Recently foaled mare which has retained the foetal membranes (placenta)
- Obesity especially fat pony grazing lush pasture
- Any illness which produces a toxaemia
- Common complication following colic surgery
- Corticosteroids
- Concussion or extreme trauma to the foot (galloping on very hard surface)
- Hormonal problems such as Cushing’s disease
- Ingestion of certain plant toxins

And...more recently investigations by Dr. Chris Pollitt into insulin problems