

Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT)

As the equine show season steps into full swing, the number of soft tissue injuries veterinarians are seeing is sharply on the rise. With the most important shows of the season right around the corner, many performance horse owners are looking for a new treatment to keep their horses on the road.

Soft tissue injuries involving suspensory ligaments, and the flexor tendons (tendons on the back of both the front and back legs) are very frustrating to treat, usually requiring strict confinement and long periods of rest. Fortunately, new technology such as Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT) is granting us new opportunities to speed the healing process and get our horses back in the show ring.

ESWT is the same technology that human physicians use to break up kidney stones. It is also used in human medicine to speed the healing of chronic wounds and a variety of orthopedic conditions primarily involving the heel and elbow.

ESWT uses focused, high energy shock waves to help trigger the body's own repair mechanisms. These short burst of energy increase the blood supply to the selected area, ushering in the body's natural defenses. This facilitates the healing of tendons, joints and bones thus speeding the return to function for our equine athlete.

This new treatment modality has the capability of being focused 5mm, 20mm 35mm and 80mm below the surface of the skin. Due to this flexibility, ESWT can also be used to treat fractures of bones that a few short years ago would have required invasive surgery. Additionally, this therapy is effective in treating arthritic hocks, and the lumbosacral region.

Shockwave treatments do not require extensive tranquilization or general anesthesia and can be performed in a matter of minutes. In most cases, a light sedative is administered to prevent the patient from moving and for the protection of the veterinarian and staff. The appropriate settings are selected (proper depth, number of pulses and energy intensity) and the treatment is completed in 5-10 minutes. Due to the noninvasive nature of the treatment, there is no need for sterile preparation and therefore no chance of infection.

If you have a horse that you feel could benefit from ESWT or you have questions regarding this new treatment, please do not hesitate to call or stop by. We are pleased to have invested in this new technology and we are looking forward to keeping you and your horses going do down the road for many miles to come.