

‘Laminitis can kill’, warns The Blue Cross



Leading animal charity The Blue Cross is warning of the dangers of laminitis after a pony handed over to the charity with a particularly severe case of the condition had to be tragically euthanased on arrival to prevent any further suffering.

Tango, a Shetland gelding, was recently signed over to The Blue Cross equine welfare centre at Burford in Oxfordshire when his elderly owner could no longer provide him with the care he needed. But when the pony arrived it was clear that he was in agony and virtually unable to walk.

An immediate veterinary examination diagnosed severe laminitis, a serious and debilitating metabolic condition that causes damage to the structure of the feet. X-rays confirmed that Tango's feet were in the worst possible state, causing him excruciating pain with no likelihood of recovery, leaving the only option of euthanasia.

Burford centre vet Natasha Seely BVM&S MRCVS, who treated Tango, said: "This is one of the worst cases of laminitis I have ever seen. The pony was in a chronic state, and had clearly been in considerable pain for some time. His condition and level of suffering was such that we had no option but euthanasia."

Vicki Alford, equine centre manager at The Blue Cross, Burford continued: "Laminitis is a painful and debilitating condition that should be treated immediately by a vet and prevented from reoccurring through long-term management. This is a shocking example of how dangerous it can be if left untreated, and should be a warning to all horse owners."

If you think your horse or pony could be susceptible to laminitis, remember that prevention is far better than cure. Restrict grass intake by limiting paddock turnout, using strip grazing or a grazing muzzle and provide regular exercise to keep your horse or pony trim. Look out for early warning signs of laminitis such as an increased digital pulse in the foot and a reluctance to place weight on the front feet, and make sure you call your vet as soon as possible.

Download a Blue Cross factsheet for further information on the symptoms, management and prevention of laminitis at www.allaboutpets.org.uk/factsheets/horse/health/laminitis.

For essential practical advice on how to keep your horse or pony slim and healthy all year round you can order a Blue Cross *Fat Horse Slim* weight management pack by visiting www.fathorseslim.org.uk or ringing **0845 230 1672**. Proceeds will support The Blue Cross's work helping animals in need.

The Blue Cross receives no government funding so it relies on the public to support its vital work. To find out more or make a donation, please visit www.bluecross.org.uk.