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Rogue Valley Equine Hospital

Horse Health News



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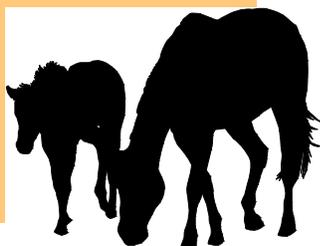
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Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction Cushing's Syndrome

For centuries people have recognized a condition of older horses and ponies that appeared to be an inability to shed out their long winter coats. The condition was known as 'hirsutism'. In the latter half of the last century the condition was found to be similar to Cushing's syndrome in dogs and people, and the same term was used to describe the condition in horses. Recently, many differences between the human and equine syndromes have been discovered, and the equine condition is now more accurately termed Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID).

Equine PPID is a slowly progressive disorder of older animals that has a highly characteristic clinical picture. Typically, the animal is more than fifteen years old. In advanced cases a long, curly hair coat that fails to shed normally is common, but in the early stages the hair coat may be normal. Conditions often associated with PPID are a history of chronic laminitis, lethargy, abnormal fat distribution, excessive water consumption and urination, infertility, excessive sweating, and chronic infections. Metabolic Syndrome, which was discussed in the last newsletter, is a closely related disorder of glucose metabolism that is thought to be involved in the development of PPID and is often seen with PPID.

The cause of PPID is an adenomatous (benign, cancerous) enlargement of the intermediate lobe of the pituitary gland. This enlargement results in the excessive production of many hormones, including adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). High levels of ACTH in turn cause the adrenal gland to overproduce cortisol, an endogenous steroid.