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Ask A Vet

Shouldn't fractures show up in radiographs a week and a half after a horse's last race, and shouldn't calcium deposits be noticeable?

In many instances this is true, but it is not always true. It depends upon the location of the fracture and the type of fracture.

For example, if there is a fracture of the dorsal aspect of P1, the fractures generally will show up fairly soon, if not immediately, on the radiograph. The same is true for a chip in the knee. Generally speaking, these chips will show up as soon as they occur and are obvious on radiographs.

There are other types of fractures, specifically tibial stress fractures, cortical fractures of the dorsal cannon bone, fractures along the long axis of P1, that do not necessarily show up immediately on radiographs.

Although we have enhanced radiographic abilities with digital radiograph equipment, not everything will show up immediately. So it is not true that fractures will always show up within a week and a half.

It also is not true that calcium deposits will form. Calcium deposits generally do not form in situations in which the fractures are normal chip fractures as in the knees and the fetlocks of race horses.

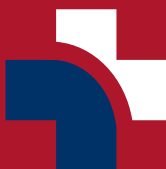
Calcium deposits will form in some fractures of the long bones and of the pasterns, for example, and also in stress fractures of the cannon bone. Sometimes the most obvious thing that is seen is a callus that is deposited at the dorsal surface of the cannon bone as a result of a fracture.



Michael A. Spirito, D.V.M.

Dr. Spirito spent two years working with a veterinarian on the Maryland Race track circuit whose primary interest was lameness. After that, he attended veterinary school in Torino, Italy, and graduated in 1980. While there, he spent a lot of time at the racetracks looking at lame horses. He returned to the United States and spent a year at the New Jersey Equine Clinic before joining Hagyard in 1982. His primary interests are juvenile orthopedics, sales and pre-purchase work and soft tissue surgery involving the broodmare. Dr. Spirito has a special interest in lameness and conformation and has dedicated his career to these areas.

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HagyardPharmacy.com

(859)281-9511

info@hagyardpharmacy.com