Laser Therapy for Laminitis - Aimee

During the winter of 2011-2012, Aimee, my hackney cross pony mare, had a severe laminitis episode. Fortunately she survived and during the summer and fall of 2012 she was getting around pretty well, to the point of playing tag with her dry lot friend. Sadly, just before Christmas of 2012 she had another episode, although not nearly as severe as the year before. Treatment involved bute and ranitidine hydrochloride (zantac) twice a day, as well as hoof trimming every 6-8 weeks. After nearly 4 months, her recovery had not progressed very well and the possibility of euthanasia was looming.

After consulting Dr. Brenda Tabor-Adams, of Northwoods Animal Learning and Wellness Center, it was decided to try laser therapy. Since there is not much information regarding its effectiveness for the treatment of laminitis it was decided to use Aimee as a test case. Ideally she will become useable as a cart pony, realistically, it is hoped that she will be comfortable without painkillers.

The treatment regimen of laser therapy was started in late March of 2013, with two treatments per week for two weeks, and one treatment per week for 3 weeks. After the first treatment Aimee’s comfort level improved dramatically. However, a regularly scheduled hoof trimming shortly after made her quite sore again for a few days. Bute and ranitidine hydrochloride dosing were continued with the addition of chaste tree berry powder to help regulate hormones and insulin resistance.

With each laser treatment a slightly higher comfort level was maintained. New hoof growth seemed to be more stable and had not flared out. It is hoped that lowering the heels and rolling the toes with a rasp every two weeks, and the application of liniment to tendons, will allow her coffin bones to return to a more normal angle.

After two weeks off of laser therapy Dr. Tabor-Adams did a follow up exam. The doctor was very pleased with the amount and quality of new hoof growth. It is hoped that within a few months her regular trimmings will remove most of the flared hoof.

As Aimee’s comfort levels increase, so do her activity levels. She is beginning to act more like the boss mare that she is. At feeding time, hay is spread around the dry lot to encourage more movement. Scrounging for grass keeps her busy also.
Aimee will have a regular hoof trim in about two weeks. She will have another laser therapy session if needed afterwards. In the meantime, we will continue with the bute regimen until most of her old hoof growth is removed.

Just a couple of months ago I was considering euthanasia for my sweet little pony. Now I find myself looking forward to many years with her, and the possibility of kicking butt in Open Pleasure Driving classes.

Thank you, Dr. Tabor-Adams, for helping us through this difficult time.

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