

9. Summary

Laminitis (Pododermatitis Aseptica Diffusa) in Horses - an Article on the History of Domestic Animal Illnesses

This dissertation investigates the development of knowledge about laminitis in horses from the earliest written evidence to the present day.

The differing opinions of practitioners, scientists and laymen, as well as the problems and errors which arise during the examination of this significant horse-limb disease, will be highlighted in the context of the scientific understanding and the cultural aspects of different eras.

Using historical sources, the dissertation relates the knowledge of the nature of laminitis, its etiology, its pathogenesis, and its diagnosis, as well as its treatment, its prophylaxis and its prognosis, to the spirit of the various ages and the scientific knowledge which existed at the time.

Over time, and even during the past few decades, the understanding of the nature of laminitis has undergone significant change.

The first evidence of the disease can be traced back to ancient times, although early reports concerning its symptoms were, in some cases, neither clear nor specific. Nevertheless, it is clear that, even in those days, people were able to distinguish between different forms of the disease.

Even today, the etiology and pathogenesis of laminitis is not entirely clear. In ancient times and in the middle ages, a lack of knowledge about anatomy and physiology resulted in numerous explanations and theories. In particular, in the middle ages, the influence of superstition and religious constraints hindered the development of scientific knowledge. Accordingly, today the methods of treatment of the time seem quite “adventurous”, and make the lack of treatments which exist in today’s empirical age all the more evident.

While written sources from ancient times and the middle ages are comparatively rare, things changed with the advent of printing.

The founding of universities in the second half of the 18th century resulted in the spread of scientific literature.

Since the beginning of the second half of the 19th century, many articles on laminitis have been published, in the form of monographs and articles in specialist magazines and teaching books. These contained new pathological-anatomical findings and more wide-ranging investigations which could make a considerable contribution to the clarification of the etiology and course of the disease.

The dissertation discusses the different opinions – some of which are diametrically opposed – concerning the pathogenesis and treatment of laminitis.

In the 19th and 20th century, scientific and technical innovations contributed to a better understanding of the nature and the pathogenesis of laminitis and offered new possibilities for diagnosis and treatments.

Laminitis remains one of the major diseases of the horse and, despite new discoveries and new therapeutic possibilities, it is still difficult to cure. Accordingly, the prophylaxis of laminitis is still of great importance today.