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Congenital Lateral Luxation of the Patella in the Horse

Abstract

Lateral luxation of the patella has been described in horses and ponies. Medial luxation has been reported only twice. Upward fixation of the patella is not true luxation. This report concerns two cases of lateral luxation of the patella related to hypoplasia of the lateral ridge of the trochlea of the femur.

Disciplines

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CONGENITAL LATERAL LUXATION OF THE PATELLA IN THE HORSE

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LATERAL luxation of the patella has been described in horses and ponies.^{1,2,5} Medial luxation has been reported only twice.⁵ Upward fixation of the patella²⁻⁶ is not true luxation. This report concerns two cases of lateral luxation of the patella related to hypoplasia of the lateral ridge of the trochlea of the femur.

The first case was a 6-month-old Morgan colt. The referring veterinarian thought that the colt's left stifle had been injured by the mare when it was 3 days old. Physical examination revealed no outstanding abnormalities except in the stifle. The patella was displaced laterally and the straight patellar ligaments were intact. The animal was destroyed 6 months later.

The second case was a 1-year-old Standardbred colt which, according to the owner, appeared normal until 3 months of age. At that time it was lame in the left stifle, and 3 months

later was referred to New Bolton Center for examination. There was marked lameness, and the patella was loose, moveable, and displaced laterally. The colt was destroyed.

PATHOLOGY

In both cases the lateral ridge of the femoral trochlea

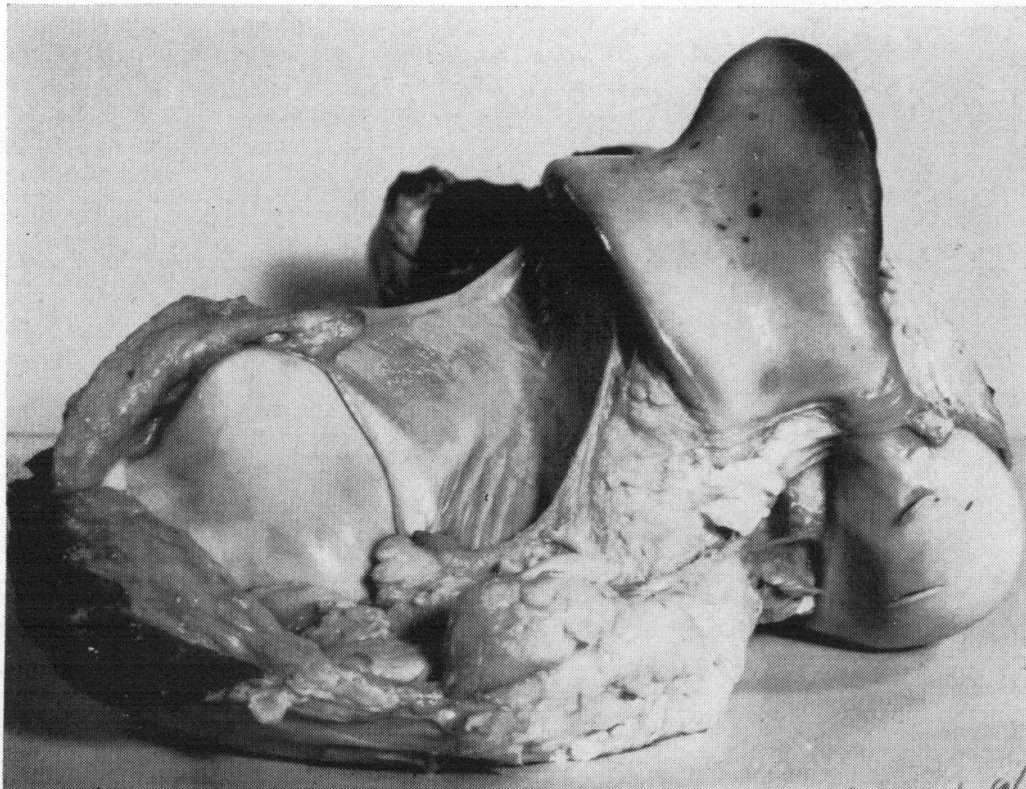


Fig. 1. Distal end of a normal femur with the patella reflected laterally (case 1).

was hypoplastic (figures 1 and 2). In addition there was marked arthrosis as a result of improper position and movement of the patella on the trochlea (figure 2). In view of the age of onset of obvious luxation and the nature of the primary lesions (hypoplasia) it is apparent that this was a congenital problem in both animals.

DISCUSSION

While lateral luxation of the patella is not common in

horses, it is important to define the cause in individual cases in order to permit rational evaluation of prognosis and treatment. If trochlear ridge hypoplasia can be reasonably defined as the underlying lesion, the prognosis is obviously poor for the future working usefulness of the animal.

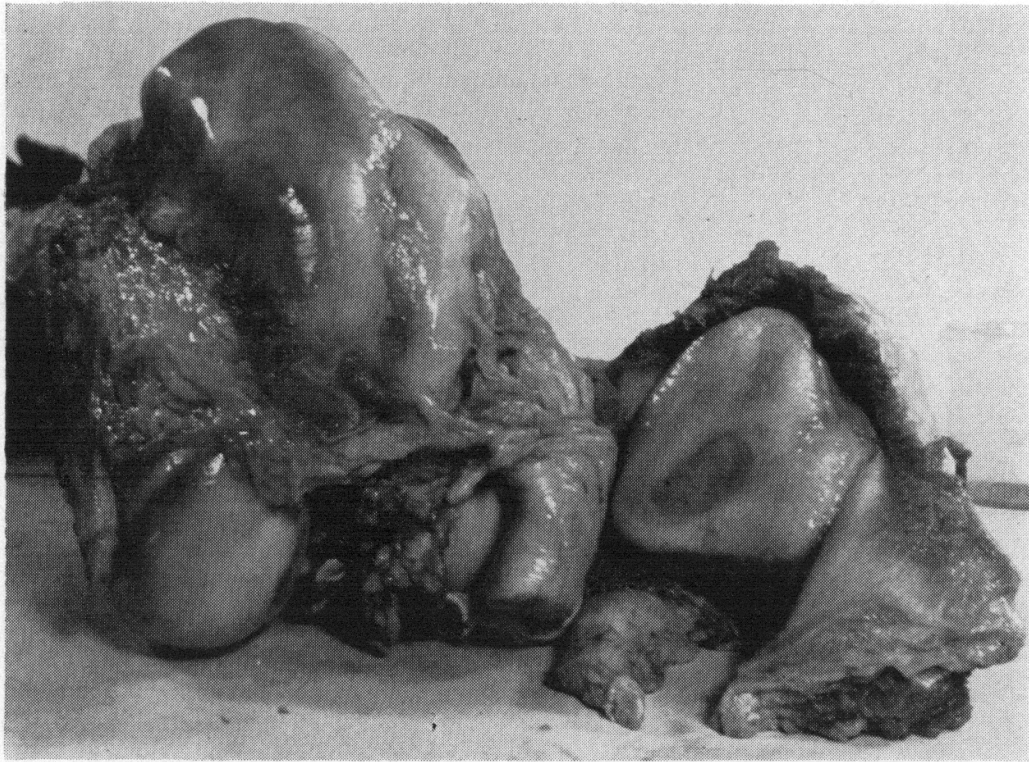


Fig. 2. Opposite leg with hypoplasia of the lateral trochlear ridge and cartilage erosion on the cranial aspect of the femur and on the patella (case 1).

Rathor⁵ reviewed the literature and studied numerous cases of lateral luxation of the patella of ponies in the Netherlands. The condition in ponies and, according to some authors in horses as well, was considered to be hereditary in nature. Rathor⁵ described hypoplasia of the femoral trochlea in ponies but apparently was not fully aware of the implications. Surgical procedures⁵ have been described, but it would appear poor practice to attempt repair of an obviously congenital and probably hereditary condition.

SUMMARY

Two cases of lateral luxation of the patella in horses are presented. The cause was considered to be congenital hypoplasia of the lateral ridge of the femoral trochlea.

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