

ADVANCED TENDON HEALING REHABILITATION TECHNIQUES FROM A RIDERS PERSPECTIVE

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Whatever the equestrian discipline a horse is competed in, many horses will suffer from some form of tendon injury during their life. Whether predisposed by age related degenerative tissue structure, intensity of training and competition or any of the countless other causal factors, the owner will most likely want to prevent further damage and must anticipate a lengthy healing process which up to recently resulted in much loss of muscle tone, strength and coordination.

A 13 YO Belgian Warmblood gelding fell victim to a nasty tendon lesion by unknown causes. After several months of on and off light lameness, only the second full veterinary inspection and a gait analysis using GaitSmart, were able to pinpoint the location of the lesion: the RH SDFT core close to the olecranon. The injury proved to be far more severe than anticipated by the level of lameness and prospects to remain in the sport looked very slim. The initially prescribed rehab plan however, was of a very traditional and scientifically outdated nature. The various connections of GaitSmart Netherlands resulted in the formation of an entirely different method, using a team of specialists who are all highly experienced in the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of equine tendon injuries.

The starting point of this method is the production of advanced ultrasound imaging using the UTC Scanner (Ultrasound Tissue Characterisation), designed by Dr Hans van Schie and used very effectively by Dr Franklin Lashley of De Raaphorst clinic in Wassenaar and Dr Henk Offereins from Ireland of Equinetendon.com. This first step is to accurately assess the quality of the fibre alignment within the damaged tendon. Based on the severity of the injury, the next step is to exert the highest possible load and maximise the exercise on the tendon by using the Equestride brace. This brace can be set in 4 settings, from an almost immobilised fetlock joint all the way to very light fetlock support, thereby unloading the SDFT and DDFT over their full length. In this specific case it allowed the horse to be ridden twice a day from day one, starting with two periods of 25 minutes each of walk under saddle. Every six weeks the UTC scan was repeated to reassess the improvement of tendon fibre alignment and for a redesign of an intensified training schedule by the UTC specialized vet. During the first two months, the horse was also treated with high power laser in the affected areas, in close dialogue with the veterinary team.

After 8 months of virtually normal riding training (except for jumping) the horse has now completely recovered without the slightest trace of injury, having been ridden and trained daily throughout the entire rehab period. The horse is back in competition.

Lay person message: The avoidance of any form of box rest for any level of tendon injury, along with the precise application of the Equestride Tendon & Suspensory Ligament Injury Recovery System by assessment of the tendon fibre alignment levels using UTC Imaging technology is a highly effective and proven method for successful tendon healing.

Keywords: Equinetendon.com; UTC Imaging; ultrasound; rehabilitation training; Equestride; GaitSmart



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