

## **How Feetfirst Hay can help manage the symptoms of Cushings**

Grass and pasture can be trigger factors for laminitis but up to 90% of cases have an underlying primary cause such as Cushings (PPID) and/or Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) (Donaldson *et al*, 2004; Karikoski *et al*, 2011) which cause hormonal disorders

Cushings cases with high insulin levels have a poorer prognosis and are less likely to survive (McGowan *et al*, 2004). The higher the insulin levels, the more severe the laminitis, so improving insulin levels reduces the severity of the laminitis (Walsh *et al*, 2009).

Prascend (pergolide) is the only medication that can control the symptoms of Cushings and is prescribed once a positive diagnosis has been obtained. Even so, leading vets consider that Pergolide will not guarantee to prevent laminitis, so it is important to keep insulin levels low at all times.

Modern feeding practices can put horses and ponies at risk from raised insulin levels as concentrate feeds can raise blood glucose levels three times higher than normal (Rodiek and Stull, 2005). Even a low calorie fibre blend marketed for laminitis prone horses and ponies containing 10% sugar and 4% starch raised blood insulin levels by 3 to 8 times in normal ponies (Borer *et al*, 2012).

An upper limit of 10% combined sugar and starch was selected for the Feetfirst Hay brand based on recommendations by Dr Eleanor Kellon, an independent nutritionist with considerable experience of managing horses and ponies with metabolic disorders such as Cushings, EMS, IR and laminitis.

Using Feetfirst Hay as the foundation for insulin management gives the best chance of controlling and maintaining low insulin levels to reduce the risk of laminitis. Every batch is grown from our unique blend of traditional pasture grasses and is fully tested, hence its reputation as a consistent and reliable supply of forage.

All horses and ponies need forage in their diet, so it makes sense to feed forage with the right nutritional value to keep insulin levels low and reduce the risk of laminitis.