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Is Your Horse's Behavior Due to Pain?

exercise to ensure we collect all vital information, including when their body is put under stress.

Recently, a friend of mine was concerned that his horse was not behaving as usual, affecting his performance by throwing his head back. After a thermography scan, we could see he had an infection in his lower jaw, solving the question of why he was behaving differently.

We have found that most behavioral issues have been related to pain, discomfort, or low-grade lameness. Also, when thermography has not found any major concerns, it can give owners the confidence to continue with training.

There are many benefits to thermography. If you are unsure if your horse's behavior is stemming from a physical issue manifesting as bad behavior, we can help.

By measuring emitted heat from the horse, we can detect inflammation which gives a direction to identify the root cause, saving both time and money on investigation, and allowing more of these resources for treatment and optimal recovery.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners in Lexington, Kentucky, found that thermography provided significant information in 86 percent of the horses examined and was useful in locating areas of injury. It has been most commonly used to evaluate horses with back or hind limb lameness, or to evaluate a horse prior to purchase.

Our horses cannot tell us what is ailing them. But, with the help of thermography, together we can find the areas troubling them, being a voice for your horse. 

IF YOU HAVE NOTICED CHANGES in your horse's mood—aggressive behavior, napping, performance problems, or a reluctance to do normal activities—could it be stemming from pain? Many veterinarians and horse owners are challenged with this very question.

Owners often hesitate to launch a full veterinary investigation, especially in the absence of lameness, so they outsource behavior issues to other professionals. For example, many owners contact physiotherapists, massage therapists, and utilize alternative holistic care before consulting their vet. If this sounds familiar, know it is better to use a collective approach first. This way, it is possible to search for the cause within the horse and not overlook that pain could be causing the changes.

Thermography is not a picture of pain, but it is a picture of autonomic dysfunction that correlates

to regions of pain. Our thermography technology helps to isolate areas of abnormality; this knowledge helps us to know if any further testing is needed. Because it has a relatively low cost and is a full-body assessment, this noninvasive and easy to perform technique is a popular choice for owners and veterinarians after a clinical examination, at the start of their investigation.

The assessment process does not require sedation and can, in most circumstances, be carried out in the comfort of your horse's stable. Many veterinary practices use our services to identify pathology, spinal conditions, arthritis, and the early stages of injury and disease. Results are provided by our team of qualified veterinarians and can also help professionals cater to training plans and select the best form of treatment for the horse. When possible, we image horses before and after



PHOTO: BRIANNA BRADBURY

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Thermography is located at 22000 N. Pepper Rd., in Lake Barrington. www.nwmtclinic.com or call 224-600-3216.