

## What's the Alternative?

### OUR EXPERT

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# Equine laser therapy

In an age where 'seasons' blur and down-time merely indicates 'a Change' rather than 'a Rest', we humans place an extraordinary burden of stress on our ever willing equine partners. Shorter recovery times, better quality healing and ease of application, however, all recommend 'Laser Therapy' and 'Laser Acupuncture' as excellent treatment modalities for the modern horse, based on sound research and proven treatment protocols.

Low Level Laser Therapy (LLLT) works on the principle that every cell in the body responds to light.

Different cells are activated by different wave-lengths and/or different pulsing frequencies, resulting in less inflammation and a faster heal with less scarring

'Equine Laser Therapy' is an area of veterinary medicine that is expanding with each new piece of clinical research published and, as an adjunct to conventional veterinary practice, offers a non-invasive, painless, yet extremely effective means of treating fractures, wounds and infections, together with many other tissue related injuries and problems.

'LLLT', or 'Cold Laser' as it is sometimes known, is used to stimulate cells that are working sub-optimally, as in an injured state, by the promotion of the body's own analgesic, vasodilatory, anti-inflammatory and immune system responses. In this way, wound healing is accelerated, enhancing recovery from accidental or post-surgical tissue trauma, soft tissue injuries, torn tendons, ruptured ligaments, scarring or fractures; as well as being extremely effective in helping to neutralise infection, even deep in bone or hoof or where wounds are 'non-healing' or drug-resistant by conventional veterinary methods

Laser is best applied as soon as possible following an injury. Energy, in the form of photons, promote specific biochemical reactions within the mitochondria of a cell. This leads to a cascade of inter-cellular reactions resulting in increased tissue oxygenation, increased fibroblast proliferation and migration, together with modulation of cytokine levels, growth factors and inflammatory mediators, all part of the natural healing process.

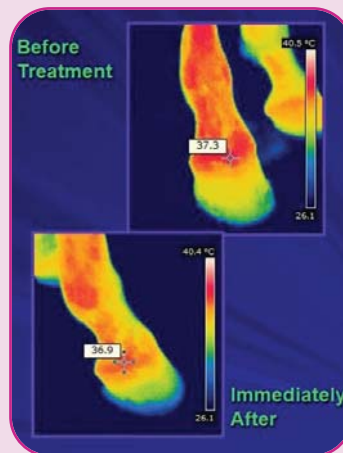
## CASE STUDY

Willow, a now 15 year old pony had suffered with worsening mud-fever on his only white-sock for four successive years. His owner, Nikki, who worked at the local vets, had tried every product and regime they could offer to lessen the problem, but to no avail. She then remembered that LLLT had made a remarkable difference healing a significant injury to the hock of a polo pony and called for an appointment.

### Before Treatment



Leg is hairless, hot, dry and scabby. Coronary band dry, pitted and sunken. Hoof wall dry, cracked, chipped and concave in outline.



### Day 1

Treatment was interesting, since he was wary of anyone approaching his leg! However, with perseverance the first treatment was completed and pre and post Thermal Images showed his leg cooler, with his whole attitude and stance more comfortable.

### 1 Month Later

Four more weekly treatments were given over the following month. No scabs, no heat and start of hair re-growth.

In addition to local cellular effects, Laser Therapy also enhances the level of endorphin release which, together with its capacity to suppress c-fibre activity, can be successfully used in the management of pain.

When compared to Ultrasound, as it so often is, the advantages of Laser are that there is no need to clip or apply gel, important when treating competition horses; it can be applied over fresh, open wounds - even to stem bleeding itself; it can be used over staples, pins, plates and plastics; and, since there is no oscillation of tissue involved, it can safely be used over fractures and growth plates

In addition, Laser can also be used for 'Laser Acupuncture', to stimulate points in lieu of needles - providing an equally effective aseptic, non-invasive and painless means of applying the same natural laws and principles as Traditional Acupuncture, that is safer for both horse and practitioner.

Essentially a Drug-Free modality, Laser Therapy that can be applied as a stand-alone treatment, or along-side conventional veterinary practices. Effectiveness of treatment, however, also depends on the competency of the practitioner. As with all complimentary therapies, veterinary permission must always be sought prior to treatment, after which the degree of success will ultimately rest with the practitioner's own ability to assess the trauma and implement the correct wavelength, energy density and pulsing frequency that each situation requires.

Laser Therapy is at last being recognised for the contribution it can give to improved wound healing. However, there are an ever increasing number of lasers on the market now that are sold with little regard to the purchaser's knowledge and/or competency.

A 'point and squirt' approach may yield some results, but for long lasting success the completion of dedicated training in the field of use will uphold the integrity of Laser Therapy as a whole and its hard fought for value and standing within the veterinary profession.



### **6 Weeks Later (Without further treatment)**

Significant hair re-growth, coronary band more supple and better nourished and the hoof wall is less dry and less brittle.



### **3 Months later (again without further treatment)**

Luxuriant growth of hair, healthy coronary and the hoof wall is starting to show a normal convex outline developing below the coronary band.

### **Follow up**

The following year, I was called out again as there was the merest hint of mud-fever, however, two further treatments stopped it in its tracks. Since then there has been no further reoccurrence and checking up on him recently (some 2½ years later) Nikki reported Willow was happy, settled and more willing than he had ever been, with the hoof its correct shape, with no hint of crack or chip.