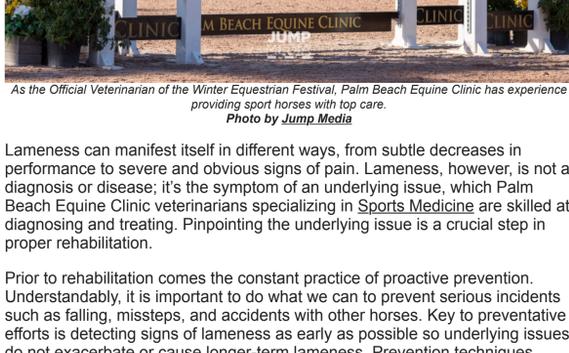


Keeping Horses in the Game: Navigating Lameness Prevention and Treatment

Our responsibility with horses is to keep them healthy and sound. Horses are incredible athletes, and we ask a lot of them. It's important that they are cared for as the elite athletes they are. Non-equestrians do not equate an equine athlete to a football player, marathon runner, or gymnast, but as horse owners, we know that the same level of dedication is required to keep horses in optimal health and fitness.

The goals of equine Sports Medicine are to keep horses feeling and performing at their best, to detect subtle changes and appropriately address underlying issues, and to correctly diagnose and treat injuries to get horses back to optimum health. Despite being powerful and strong animals, horses are quite fragile, as most horse owners have come to learn. One day they are competing in perfect form, and the next they might walk out of their stall lame. Thus begins the process of addressing the issue and determining a treatment plan.



As the Official Veterinarian of the Winter Equestrian Festival, Palm Beach Equine Clinic has experience providing sport horses with top care. Photo by Jump Media

Lameness can manifest itself in different ways, from subtle decreases in performance to severe and obvious signs of pain. Lameness, however, is not a diagnosis or disease; it's the symptom of an underlying issue, which Palm Beach Equine Clinic veterinarians specializing in Sports Medicine are skilled at diagnosing and treating. Pinpointing the underlying issue is a crucial step in proper rehabilitation.

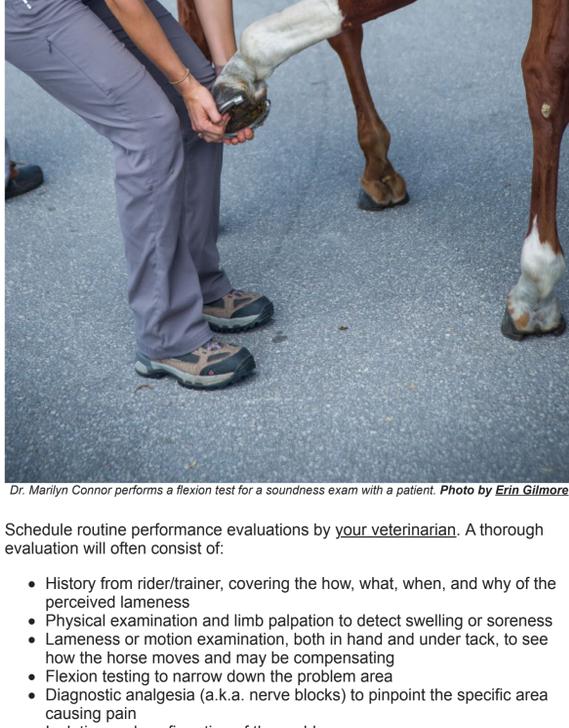
Prior to rehabilitation comes the constant practice of proactive prevention. Understandably, it is important to do what we can to prevent serious incidents such as falling, missteps, and accidents with other horses. Key to preventative efforts is detecting signs of lameness as early as possible so underlying issues do not exacerbate or cause longer-term lameness. Prevention techniques, combined with proper training and rest, high-quality nutrition, and correct and balanced farrier work, help reduce normal wear-and-tear injuries.

Keys to Catching Lameness Early

Early recognition of the signs of lameness may help prevent more serious injuries from occurring that could shorten a performance horse's career. Having a firm understanding of what your horse's "normal" is will be crucial to identifying subtle changes in behaviors, movement, or body conditions:

- Do a daily hands-on leg check, comparing opposite legs to detect heat, swelling, or sensitivity
- Watch for shortened strides, decreased performance, reduced stamina, changes in attitude
- Give the horse a few days off if you suspect a problem; if the signs return when they go back to work, ask your veterinarian to examine them
- Remember that a mild problem can blossom into a career-limiting condition if left untreated

Palm Beach Equine Clinic frequently provides lameness evaluations to assess the source of an alteration in a horse's gait. If an owner suspects a horse may be lame, a prompt and thorough lameness evaluation should be performed for the betterment of the animal. Lameness may be demonstrated by issues in areas of the body besides the legs, and owners may notice the physical changes as well as a difference in the horse's attitude and behavior.



Dr. Marilyn Connor performs a flexion test for a soundness exam with a patient. Photo by Erin Gilmore

Schedule routine performance evaluations by your veterinarian. A thorough evaluation will often consist of:

- History from rider/trainer, covering the how, what, when, and why of the perceived lameness
- Physical examination and limb palpation to detect swelling or soreness
- Lameness or motion examination, both in hand and under tack, to see how the horse moves and may be compensating
- Flexion testing to narrow down the problem area
- Diagnostic analgesia (a.k.a. nerve blocks) to pinpoint the specific area causing pain
- Isolation and confirmation of the problem area
- Imaging – Radiograph (X-Ray), Ultrasound, Nuclear Scintigraphy (Bone Scan), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Computed Tomography (CT) – to diagnose underlying issues
- Specific identification of the lameness or performance problem

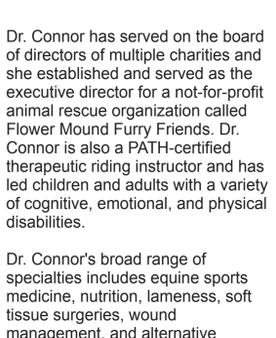
Treatment Options

Though preventative care is crucial, we cannot avoid all injuries. Therefore, it is important to work with your veterinarian to develop the best treatment plan before an injury occurs. There are traditional treatment methods such as conservative treatment (rest, ice, compression), medical management (NSAIDs, steroids), intra-articular medication (joint injections), soft tissue (self-derived biologic therapies such as stem cells or pro-stride and shockwave, laser, and ultrasound), and as a last resort, surgery.

Palm Beach Equine Clinic also offers comprehensive Alternative Therapy options for when traditional sports medicine is not your choice. Veterinarians create treatment and rehabilitation programs using traditional and non-traditional therapies, laser, regenerative ultrasound, acupuncture and Chinese medicine, and shockwave therapy. Palm Beach Equine Clinic can help advise when an alternative method may be the appropriate or adjunct treatment.

There are many non-intuitive causes of lameness that horsemen are not able to diagnose without the watchful eye of an experienced Sport Horse Veterinarian. At Palm Beach Equine Clinic, the goal is to get horses "back in the game" and keep them safe throughout their athletic careers.

PBEC veterinarians know how horse owners who have dedicated years of effort and resources to the maintenance of high-caliber sport horses.



Also the Official Veterinarian of the Adequan Global Dressage Festival, PBEC has expertise in a variety of sport horse disciplines. Photo by Jump Media

PBEC veterinarians strive to be a part of each winning team and have been committed to delivering comprehensive care. Contact your Palm Beach Equine Clinic veterinarian today to make sure your horse is in their optimum health.

[Read More](#)

Meet Our Team: Marilyn Connor, DVM, CVC

Dr. Marilyn Connor is originally from just north of Dallas, TX, and completed her undergraduate education at Texas A&M University. She graduated with honors with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Science with minors in Chemistry and Business. In 2014, Dr. Connor returned to Texas A&M University to complete her veterinary education at its College of Veterinary Medicine.



Dr. Marilyn Connor has participated in the PBEC Educational Series on behalf of PBEC. Photo by Jump Media

Dr. Connor has served on the board of directors of multiple charities and she established and served as the executive director for a not-for-profit animal rescue organization called Flower Mound Furry Friends. Dr. Connor is also a PATH-certified therapeutic riding instructor and has led children and adults with a variety of cognitive, emotional, and physical disabilities.

Dr. Connor's broad range of specialties includes equine sports medicine, nutrition, lameness, soft tissue surgeries, wound management, and alternative medicine. She is certified in veterinary medical manipulation and is working toward certification with the International Society of Equine Locomotor Pathologists and Locomotor Pathologists and veterinarians acupuncture through the Chi Institute.

[Learn More About Dr. Connor](#)

PBEC Now Accepting Applications for Internship Program

Palm Beach Equine Clinic offers an internship program for those seeking experience in all facets of equine medicine and surgical procedures. An internship with Palm Beach Equine Clinic can kickstart a veterinary career by giving recent DVM graduates clinical experience on a variety of equine medical conditions before they advance into associate positions.



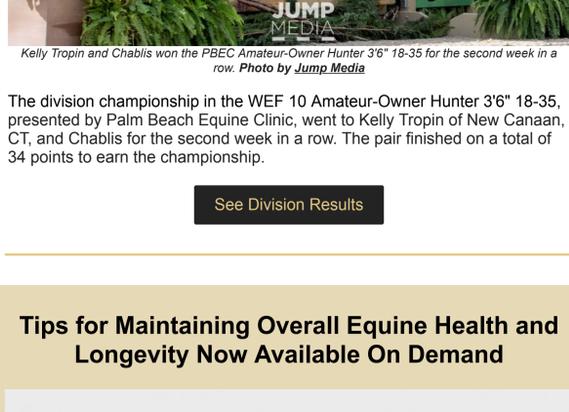
Photo courtesy of PBEC

Palm Beach Equine Clinic interns are responsible for many duties including hospital patient care, surgery and anesthesia, ambulatory, diagnostic imaging, and emergency care. Outside of patient care, interns are responsible for keeping up proper, detailed records and must also participate in ongoing education through research and journaling.

[Apply Here](#)

Chablis Reigns in Amateur-Owner Hunters During WEF 10

Kelly Tropin and Chablis Claim Championship in PBEC Amateur-Owner Hunter 3'6" 18-35



Kelly Tropin and Chablis won the WEF 10 Amateur-Owner Hunter 3'6" 18-35 for the second week in a row. Photo by Jump Media

The division championship in the WEF 10 Amateur-Owner Hunter 3'6" 18-35, presented by Palm Beach Equine Clinic, went to Kelly Tropin of New Canaan, CT, and Chablis for the second week in a row. The pair finished on a total of 34 points to earn the championship.

[See Division Results](#)

Tips for Maintaining Overall Equine Health and Longevity Now Available On Demand



Palm Beach Equine Clinic

As a proud sponsor of the 2021 PBIEC Educational Series, presented by Adequan®, PBEC vets hosted a virtual educational webinar during the Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF) 2. During the session, entitled "Tips for Maintaining Overall Equine Health and Longevity," Drs. Marilyn Connor, Tyler Davis, and Ryan Lukens offered valuable insight to participants based on their respective areas of expertise, including Sports Medicine and Regenerative Therapies, Dentistry, and Veterinary Medical Manipulation. If you missed the live session, the full presentation is now available on demand.

[Watch On Demand](#)

