

WHAT TO EXPECT

ENDOCRINE TESTING IN HORSES: PPID (previously known as Cushing's disease)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Veterinarians use the term pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID) to describe horses that have a combination of different clinical signs including the following:

- delayed shedding
- abnormally long hair coat after winter
- changes in attitude or behaviour
- increased drinking and urination
- recurrent infections
- laminitis
- decreased topline musculature
- a "pot-bellied" appearance
- neurological signs in advanced stages

PPID is a progressive and degenerative disease that mainly develops in older horses (more than 20 years old), but horses as young as eight years old can also be affected by the disease. There is no sex or breed predisposition. Clinical signs are secondary

to an altered secretion of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), which leads to alterations of various mechanisms in the body.

Measuring basal levels of ACTH is a practical test for PPID. However, in the early stages of the disease, when ACTH levels might not consistently exceed the cutoff values, a dynamic test (TRH stimulation test) would be more sensitive in detecting the disease. Some horses with PPID will concurrently have insulin dysregulation, which increases the risk for laminitis. If that is the case, our clinical team may recommend testing for PPID and equine metabolic syndrome (EMS) at the same time.

Once a horse is diagnosed with PPID, the disease can be managed with pergolide mesylate. While this medication must be given daily for the rest of the horse's life, it can greatly help in reducing clinical signs and providing a good quality of life.

GENERAL STEPS

A typical appointment for PPID testing will include the following steps:

- Your horse must be free of significant pain. As an example, if your horse has a laminitis flare up or something similarly painful, we can work on managing this issue first before testing for PPID.
- This test doesn't require fasting your horse. But if we decide to test for PPID and EMS together based on your horse's medical history and clinical signs, it must be fasted overnight. Please talk to a WCVm medicine clinician before booking an appointment.
- A senior veterinary student or a house officer (interns or residents who are licensed veterinarians) will meet you at the WCVm Large Animal Clinic reception and a registered veterinary technologist (RVT) will help you unload your horse.
- A senior veterinary student and a house officer will take a complete medical history, followed by a physical exam with the assistance of an RVT.
- Once we weigh your horse on a scale, we will take a single blood sample and send it to a laboratory to measure basal levels of ACTH.
- A further step is to perform a TRH stimulation test. To complete this test, we give your horse an injection of this hormone. After 10 minutes, we collect a second blood sample for ACTH levels.
- We may decide to test for EMS. Please read our fact sheet about this condition so you're familiar with the process.
- Testing for PPID is very simple, and the appointment usually lasts 30 to 60 minutes. It does not require any sedation.
- You are welcome to stay and watch, wait in the reception area or leave the clinic. We will call you when our team is ready to discuss our findings and recommendations and to answer your questions.
- When your horse is ready to be discharged, we will contact you. Please pay your invoice at the reception desk. Please note that full payment is required before your horse can be discharged.
- We will discuss discharge recommendations with you and follow up by email as soon as the blood sample results are available (about five to 10 days).
- If your horse is diagnosed with PPID based on the laboratory sample and clinical signs, we will make recommendations about treating with pergolide mesylate and managing your horse's diet.

WHAT TO EXPECT

ENDOCRINE TESTING IN HORSES: PPID (previously known as Cushing's disease)

ABOUT THE VMC

Welcome to the WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC), the veterinary referral centre for all of Western Canada and the teaching hospital for future veterinarians and veterinary specialists.

Our clinical team includes board-certified veterinary specialists, clinical associates and registered veterinary technologists, as well as veterinary specialists in training (residents), clinical interns and senior veterinary students. We look forward to caring for your animal and meeting you in person.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

To prepare for your visit to the VMC, please visit us online: vmc.usask.ca/about/new-client.php

You will find more information about our location, parking, hours of operation and the Large Animal Clinic reception area.

MORE DETAILS ABOUT PAYMENT

If your animal is not hospitalized, the WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre requires full payment at the time of service.

If your animal is hospitalized, half of the estimated cost is due prior to services being provided. Final payment is due at the time of discharge.

Occasionally, the hospital will mail statements to you after discharge for additional tests that were approved by you and for charges not included on the initial invoice at discharge.

The WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre accepts the following payment methods:

- cash
- credit card (Visa and MasterCard)
- debit card (Interac)

Personal cheques are not accepted.

If you have questions about payment, call the administration office at 306-966-7103 or visit vmc.usask.ca/about/payment.php.



WHAT TO EXPECT

While the WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC) shares many similarities to other veterinary hospitals, there are some differences that may have an impact on your appointment.

The VMC is a teaching hospital for WCVM veterinary students and for students enrolled in the veterinary technology program at the Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Please note that teaching takes additional time.

Students participate in all aspects of examining and treating our patients under the immediate supervision of licensed veterinarians and board-certified veterinary specialists. While teaching is essential to our facility, the well-being of our patients is the highest priority for VMC clinical teams.

Given the complexity of referral cases, we often need to order additional diagnostic testing or consult with others about diagnoses and treatment plans for patients. If you are travelling from out of town, please be prepared to stay two days in Saskatoon with your animal. In some cases, your stay may need to be longer. During your appointment, we will give you an estimate of the length of time it may take for additional tests and consultation.



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Veterinary Medical Centre

WESTERN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE
USASK.CA/VMC

Address: 52 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 5B4

Small Animal Clinic

306-966-7126

vmccorrespond@usask.ca

Large Animal Clinic

306-966-7178

vmccorrespond@usask.ca