

# Kissing Spines

---

Kissing Spines, also known as Basstrup's Disease or Baastrup's Syndrome, is a condition which mostly affects sport horses. This is probably because of the more stringent demands made on sport horses. Horses used for less strenuous work may have the condition but it could go unnoticed.

Kissing Spines is a slow degenerative condition of the bones/spines in the spinal column. The large spines which stick upwards from the vertebrae in the horse's back rub together and cause low grade inflammatory damage in the edges of the bone where they meet, causing extra bone to develop and compressing the soft tissue. Kissing Spines may cause tearing in ligaments - particularly when the horse jumps. The horse will constantly suffer low-grade pain increasing in severity when the weight of the saddle is felt on the back.

The most common area for Kissing spines is the rear vertebrae of the horse's thorax.

## SYMPTOMS OF **KISSING SPINES**

Your horse may display some of the following symptoms if suffering from Kissing Spines.

- Tenderness in the withers when touched
- Tenderness in the back when touched
- Reluctance to be saddled
- Refusal to be ridden
- Evidence of severe pain when being ridden
- Irritability when being groomed
- Struggle to maintain the canter
- Gradual change in stride length
- Poor performance
- Reluctance to jump
- Unpredictable behaviour
- Extreme stiffness in the back and hind end
- Lameness

- Rearing
- Bucking
- Bolting

#### CAUSES OF KISSING SPINES

The Causes of Kissing Spines usually fall under one of the following:

**Congenital Defect** - the horse may well have been born with the Kissing Spines condition. This could be if the back was shorter than normal or curved.

**Injury** to the back.

**Recurring damage** once the original injury has occurred.

**Long-term compensatory habits** such as repetitive back-dipping usually to avoid back pain.

#### TREATMENT FOR KISSING SPINES

Once Kissing Spines has been diagnosed by your vet via the use of X-rays, Radiographs and Scans, treatment will most likely take some of the following forms.

**Corticosteroid Injections** - the corticosteroid is injected deep into the area of pain and forms a nerve block. The success rate of this method of treatment will be judged by the intervals needed between treatments. Obviously, the longer the interval, the better.

**Surgery** - the outcome of surgery to remove the problematic spines is very good. Mostly alternate spines are treated/removed, ensuring there is no chance of re-growth of bone. Post surgery treatment will be detailed by your vet and should be strictly adhered to.

Holistic therapies such as Homeopathy, Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Laser therapy and Magnetic therapy have all been found to be effective in alleviating the symptoms of Kissing Spines. Magnetic therapy can be further enhanced by using a magnetic horse rug helping to increase the blood flow to the affected area.

Saddling improvements should be considered.