



EXTRACORPOREAL SHOCK WAVE THERAPY (ESWT)

If you have ever been on the receiving end when your horse's veterinarian delivers the gloomy news that your star athlete has injured a suspensory ligament and will need stall rest for 3 to 4 weeks, or might even face an early retirement, or if you have ever found yourself uttering the words, *"He's just not going right, Doc... I think his back is hurting him,"* take heart! Veterinary medicine, once again borrowing what has been learned from its human counterpart, is finding new success treating a number of soft tissue and bone injuries that have responded with limited success to conventional therapies. The emerging technology responsible for this encouraging news is called Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy (ESWT). More good news is that in June 2003, Pilchuck Veterinary Hospital acquired a VersaTron shock wave therapy unit, plus the knowledge necessary to provide horse owners the ESWT treatment option when indicated after thorough evaluation of a horse's injury.

What exactly is ESWT? In brief, it is a non-invasive procedure that utilizes the production of acoustic sound waves to produce high-pressure waves that are focused at a point of tissue or bone to stimulate healing. Studies have shown that it reduces inflammation, thereby reducing pain as it promotes healing. It appears to be especially effective where ligaments attach to bone, or where there's an arthritis problem. ESWT has been used successfully in the treatment of the following conditions:

- Bowed Tendons (Tendonitis)
- Suspensory Ligament Injuries (Desmitis)
- Stress Fractures
- Splint Bone Fractures or Splint Exostosis
- Bone Spavin (Hock Arthritis)
- Navicular Syndrome
- Overriding Spines (Withers)
- Sacro-iliac conditions (Hunters Bumps)
- Back Pain



It is also used in dogs for the treatment of arthritic conditions, such as hip dysplasia, tendon injuries, and non-healing fractures.

At Pilchuck Veterinary Hospital, horses are treated with ESWT on an out-patient basis. Because the VersaTron unit is portable, horses can also be treated at an owner's barn. The patient is sedated and treated standing which, once the sedation has taken effect, should take approximately 10-15 minutes. It customarily takes from one to three treatments (two to three weeks apart), depending upon the severity of the condition and the type of tissue being treated.

If you have a horse or dog that you feel may be a candidate for ESWT, consult with your veterinarian for referral, or call our equine department, 360.568.3111 or 800.208.9192. Our doctors will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the therapy.