Osteomyelitis of the Patella in Eight Foals

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Medical and intralesional surgical therapy in cases of osteomyelitis of the patella in foals can result in a good prognosis for soundness and a potential athletic career. Authors' addresses: Equine Surgery, Minster Equine Clinic, York, North Yorkshire, United Kingdom (Kay); Davidson Surgery, Hagyard Equine Medical Center, 4250 Iron Works Pike, Lexington, KY 40511 (Hunt, Rodgerson, Spirito); Equine Surgery, The Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center, Columbus, OH 43210 (Santschi); Equine Hospital and Diagnostic Center, Rossdale’s Equine Hospital, Newmarket, Suffolk, United Kingdom (Payne); e-mail: alastairtkay@hotmail.com. © 2011 AAEP.

1. Introduction
Our objective was to describe the characteristics of patella osteomyelitis lesions and to report the short- and long-term outcomes after treatment in 8 foals.

2. Materials and Methods
Medical records (2003 to 2007) and radiographs of foals that had osteomyelitis of the patella were reviewed. Inclusion criteria included clinical, radiographic, and surgical findings consistent with osteomyelitis of the patella and a long-term follow up period of >15 months. Information acquired included signalment, hematology and serum biochemical data, clinical and radiographic signs, surgical technique, and perioperative treatment. Follow-up radiographs were evaluated and outcome was determined from veterinary examination, race records, and telephone questionnaires.

3. Results
Six foals survived long term (15 months to 4 years); all received intralesional and systemic antimicrobial therapy, along with synovial lavage and antimicrobial medication. All were sound and achieved either yearling sales (n = 3), show hunter, or racing (n = 2). Two foals died in the short term (renal failure and suppurative peritonitis secondary to cecal perforation, respectively) and one foal remained lame with suppurative osteonecrosis confirmed at necropsy. This foal did not receive intralesional antimicrobial therapy.

4. Conclusion
Prompt medical and surgical therapy in cases of osteomyelitis of the patella can result in a good prognosis for soundness and a potential athletic career. Concurrent septicemia or other systemic perinatal disease can result in prolonged therapy and recovery.