

# EQUINE PPID [CUSHING'S DISEASE]

## WHAT IS IT?

Cushing's Disease (Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction, or PPID) is an endocrine disorder caused by a benign tumor of the pituitary gland, and is the most common hormone-related disease in horses. Studies have shown that 15-30% of horses and ponies over the age of 15 are affected. Clinical signs associated with the disease are associated with an over-production of a hormone called ACTH. This in turn causes abnormally high levels of cortisol, a steroid-like substance, that the body produces naturally. High levels of cortisol are responsible for many of the clinical signs associated with this disease. While PPID is not life-threatening, an imbalance in the body's natural hormones can predispose your horse to secondary infections and other serious diseases, such as laminitis.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

Clinical signs associated with PPID are highly variable and depend upon stage of the disease.

EARLY	ADVANCED
Delayed shedding of hair coat (hirsutism)	Rounded abdomen
Decreased athletic performance & lethargy	Loss of sweating
Loss of topline	Recurrent infections
Regional fat deposits	Excessive drinking & urination
Laminitis	Laminitis

## DIAGNOSIS:

A simple blood test can be performed to test the levels of ACTH in the body. Current recommendations are to test in the fall (August-October) for the most accurate results. However, testing can be performed year-round if necessary. To confirm the findings, sometimes a second dynamic test (TRH stim) is required rather than a baseline ACTH.

## TREATMENT:

The only FDA-approved treatment for PPID is a drug called Pergolide, trade name Prascend. This is a once-daily, tablet medication that can easily be fed with grain. The most common side effect is inappetance, which can be addressed by stopping treatment for a few days and re-starting at a half dose. Nutritional supplementation with magnesium or chasteberry can also help to reduce the clinical signs associated with PPID. Your veterinarian can help you to determine the best treatment based on your horse's progression of symptoms.

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Please feel free to call us with any questions!

**Auburn Equine**

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