

# FAQ's for horse owners

## **How safe is standing MRI for my horse?**

Widely used in both human and veterinary medicine, MRI is valued for its high image quality of both bone and soft tissues with no ionising radiation. The technology used to create the images is unobtrusive and poses no known risk to the horse. We are confident that our Standing Equine MRI has revolutionised the diagnosis and treatment of lameness by making the procedure safe, affordable, and widely accessible to veterinarians and horse owners, and has made a significant contribution to equine health and welfare.

You can be confident that there are no known biological hazards from static magnetic fields, and MRI does not use any ionising radiation or toxic chemicals. There are international safety standards for MRI operators to adhere to during the imaging process, and Hallmarq's low field system falls well within all relevant safety standards. Hallmarq's MRI systems are only used by trained operators who have been certified by us as being competent users.

## **Is it the same as a human MRI scanner?**

The underlying principle is exactly the same but the Hallmarq Standing Equine MRI system has been specifically designed for imaging the standing horse and not a human! The scanner operates close to floor level, and the horse can immediately step out of an opening in the magnet if it needs to. Because the Hallmarq scanner is smaller than a human MRI, it is also much quieter, only making a quiet ticking or buzzing noise during the scan.

## **What is the difference between standing and anaesthetised scanners?**

All high field scanners require the horse to have anaesthesia. Hallmarq's low-field system uses a smaller magnet which fits around the leg, allowing us to image the horse while standing and under mild sedation which can be topped up during the scan if necessary.

## **Doesn't the horse move?**

In a Hallmarq scanner, the horse stands on a solid floor and is supported by a chest rail. Specialist software, designed and developed by us, corrects any motion from the horse swaying whilst sedated. This unique piece of software not only ensures great images but has also won us the Institute of Physics Innovation Award.

## **What is the most commonly diagnosed foot pain?**

Lameness is notoriously difficult to diagnose usually involving a series of "trial and error" steps, using nerve blocks, x-rays and ultrasound for diagnosis, followed by treatment, waiting to see if this is effective and if not, going around the loop again. The individual steps in this process are reasonably inexpensive, but each time round the "lameness-loop" only results in around a 30% chance of a clear diagnosis. The total cost soon adds up.

During this process, you will incur other associated costs: farrier, livery, etc., and there is a risk that the problem may get worse while left untreated. MRI does on average work out as an economic option for all but the most straightforward cases.

## **Is it navicular syndrome?**

The most common diagnoses in the foot are:

- Navicular bone degeneration
- DDFT tendonitis
- Collateral ligament desmitis
- Traumatic arthritis
- Phalangeal bone bruises
- Navicular collateral desmitis
- Fractures

All of these diagnoses appear as pain in the foot and thus lameness in the horse, which is blocked by an injection of local anaesthetic to the heel area (palmar digital nerve) and/or the coffin joint. They can all, therefore, be described by the common term “navicular disease” or “navicular syndrome” which should be heard less and less nowadays as MRI leads to a more specific diagnosis.

## **Is it expensive?**

If lameness persists, an MRI may well cost less than repeated cycles of different tests and treatments. In addition, the scan results are with you within a few days, saving wasted time and preventing the problem getting worse. If your horse is insured for veterinary fees, all UK insurance companies, and most in other countries, will fully reimburse the cost of MRI (subject to your policy details and confirmation with your vet that it was needed).

## **I'd like my horse scanned, what do I do next?**

Speak to your vet! MRI is not appropriate for all lameness cases and your own vet will know the details of your horse's case and if referral is the best course of action.

To check the location of your nearest scanner please visit our website at [www.hallmarq.com](http://www.hallmarq.com)