

Practice Tips:

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Corrective Trimming of Corkscrew Claw

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Corkscrew claw is a hereditary condition affecting both front and hind claws, mostly outer hind claws, and result from a malalignment and twisting of the middle phalanx. The proximal and distal surfaces of the middle phalanx can be out of alignment by as much as 11°. The distal phalanx is abnormally narrow and long. This malalignment causes increased pressure on the coronary corium of the abaxial wall resulting in accelerated horn growth with lateral to medial deviation of the lateral wall, which then curls under the sole replacing some of the normal weight bearing surface. The lateral wall deviation results in curling of the toe with characteristic corkscrew formation. Corkscrew claws should be distinguished from chronic laminitic claw changes. The usual characteristic changes and signs associated with corkscrew claws include the following:

- 1) None to severe lameness.
- 2) Lateral wall not perpendicular to the ground surface but is displaced axially and curls under the sole, displacing it dorsally.
- 3) The toe is elevated with a clockwise rotation and has an axial curve at the toe.
- 4) The heel is usually overgrown and higher than the adjacent claw.

Exostosis formation above the coronary band of the abaxial hoofwall.

Corrective Trimming Technique

Start with the unaffected claw and carry out the following procedures:

- * Reduce the dorsal wall length to 7½ cms by cutting the toe.
- * Reduce the sole thickness at the toe to within 5 mm (¼") of the dorsal wall margin.
- * Straighten the dorsal wall of the corkscrew claw (Watch out for hemorrhage and stop procedure if it occurs).
- * Remove the axial curve at the toe.
- * Reduce the dorsal wall length to 7½ cms (Starting with the initial cut at 10 cms, then reducing the length with .5 cm increments until 7.5 cms unless hemorrhage occurs).
- * Balance both the toe and heel with that of the opposite already balanced claw.
- * The curved under outer wall is very hard and hoof nippers or an angle girder will facilitate removal.
- * The corkscrew claw always has a higher heel. Do not lower the heel on the opposite claw.
- * The role of the corkscrew claw, particularly on the abaxial side near the white line, can easily be over-trimmed and made too thin often resulting in hemorrhage.
- * Screw claws should be trimmed 3-5 times per year.

References

Kloosterman P. In: Lameness in Cattle. Paul R. Greenough, W.B. Saunders, 135-137.