Cutting horses require strong, sturdy bodies and limbs to successfully face off with a cow trying to escape. For instance, it accounts for 6.13% of racing injuries, said Tyler Tipton, DVM, Dipl. ACVS, an associate veterinarian at Equine Sports Medicine and Surgery (ESMS) in Weatherford, Texas. Researchers know that forelimb SDF tendonitis is a common injury in sport horses, but how these lesions affect cutting horses is not well understood. Recently, a team of veterinarians from Texas took a closer look at an important, but not well documented, injury. The study, "Superficial digital flexor tendonitis in cutting horses: 19 cases (2007–2011)" was published in the journal Equine Reproduction.

In the retrospective study, the team evaluated 19 cutting horses diagnosed at ESMS with SDF tendonitis. Of those, eight horses' lesions were considered mild, while the remaining 11 horses had moderate lesions. Additionally, the team found that all the study horses' injuries were located in the same part of the leg: the lateral (outside) aspect of the tendon, near the middle of the cannon bone. Seven study horses had SDFT lesions in the left forelimb, 11 had lesions in the right SDFT, and one horse had lesions in both SDFTs. Of those, eight horses' lesions were considered mild, while the remaining 11 horses had moderate lesions. Additionally, the team found that all the study horses' injuries were located in the same part of the leg: the lateral (outside) aspect of the tendon, near the middle of the cannon bone.

The rehabilitation program for each horse differed depending on the lesion severity and the clinical presentation of lameness. Affected horses received a variety of treatment methods:

- A period of rest prior to rehab;
- Riding under saddle with gradually increasing durations and intensities;
- Aquatic treadmill exercise;
- Hand walking;
- Three horses received shock wave therapy;
- One horses was treated with both PRP and the tendon, leading to damage of the tendon fibers,” Tipton explained. Additionally, he said, “fatigue may also have an important role in development of SDF tendonitis in cutting horses. The team hypothesized that the performance requirements of a cutting horse might contribute to the development of SDF tendonitis. Cutting horses perform a warm up or are loped for 1.5 to 2 miles (2.4 to 3.2 km) and around movements

Cutting horses were used for a variety of activities: cutting, showing, riding, egg exercises, and working stock; and

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Sixteen (82%) returned to their previous activity level, and one horse had chronic lameness associated with the SDF tendonitis; Sixteen owners and trainers were satisfied with the treatment and outcome. Recycling SDF lesions recurred in three horses (18%); Two horses that returned to their previous level of work were eventually retired for use as breeding stock; and One horse developed an SDF tendon lesion in the opposite forelimb; and Tendonitis recurred in three horses (18%); Two horses that returned to their previous level of work were eventually retired for use as breeding stock; and One horse developed an SDF tendon lesion in the opposite forelimb; and

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