EQUINE REPRODUCTION Svc.

Factors are the key preventive measures to help ensure years of enjoyment with your horse. While there is no way to guarantee that an old tendon injury won't flare up someday, these three factors are important to consider now for maintaining long-term tendon health:

1. Proper management of initial tendon injury
2. Early detection and intervention of tendon atrophy
3. Regular monitoring and management of tendon health

It sounds like your horse was very well taken care of after his injury. The fact that he was immediately given cold therapy and monitored closely by his veterinarian is a positive sign. The tendon injury was successfully managed, and the horse was allowed to fully recover before being returned to performance.

When a Thoroughbred racehorse develops a bowed tendon, it is essential to fully evaluate the cause of the injury and to determine any predisposing factors. The most common secondary finding in my experience is sole pain, which can cause the horse to persistently overload the healthy leg and contribute to tendon injury.

Many Thoroughbreds are retired from racing due to a bowed front superficial digital flexor (SDF) tendon, and fortunately with correct rehabilitation and management most of these individuals are able to pursue successful second careers as pleasure and show horses.

When I restarted him under tack, we followed veterinary instructions about slowly easing into things. We started with crossrails and slowly increased the level of work. We also continued with cold therapy and wrapping as needed. After three months, the horse was cleared by the veterinarian to return to normal training.

I have a 4-year-old unraced but race-trained off-track Thoroughbred (OTTB) gelding who was given to me after he bowed his right front tendon (it was a 30% core lesion). I rehabbed his tendon with hand-guided injection of platelet-rich plasma or stem cells directly into the lesion, or surgery to release the SDF's accessory ligament in order to allow the tendon to heal. We also employed more intensive techniques such as ultrasound and laser therapy.

Initial tendon injury management should always include rest and cold therapy, and in many cases we may employ more intensive techniques such as ultrasound and laser therapy to promote healing.

When I started him in jumping and his new career, I was aware of potential areas of joint pain that could cause him to exert too much stress on the healthy leg. I have kept a close eye on his legs, and they have been cold and tight since the original tear.

We have started over crossrails about two months ago now, and he has taken exceptionally well to jumping and his new career. Now I am looking into making him an eventer, and I want to keep him healthy, happy, and sound for as long as possible! He is already on a joint and tendon supplement.

Staying Sound Post-Tendon Injury

Choosing a style and level of competition that is appropriate for each individual is important for healthy limb mechanics, as well as to help prevent foot soreness. Off-sides and a predisposition to foot bruising. Most need the shoes for protection and regular farrier bearing. This allows you to monitor for early signs of trouble and discuss appropriate management with your veterinarian.

In the acute stages of an injury, serial manual and ultrasound exams can be performed to track the tendon's progress and ensure that it is responding positively to therapy and exercise. As the horse progresses to a rehabilitated state, it is important to monitor for signs of inflammation or swelling, hopefully you will have caught it early enough to prevent a serious setback.

Performing serial manual and ultrasound exams during your months of preparatory training, as well as during the competition season, will provide insight into the tendon's ability to withstand extreme strain than the original healthy tissue. If you hope to move up a level in workload or competition and are unsure if that tendon is up to the task, your veterinarian can perform an ultrasound exam to evaluate the tendon's ability to withstand strain.

Understanding the horse's current health and history is crucial in determining the appropriate level of competition. It is important to address these predisposing problems is critical for both the immediate post-injury period and for term successful management of a recovered tendon. With proper management and monitoring, your horse can enjoy many years of soundness and success in his new career.