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EXTRACORPOREAL SHOCK WAVE THERAPY

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The use of extracorporeal shock waves (ESW) originally developed for human urology, is a new orthopaedic treatment method. Extracorporeal shock wave therapy (ESWT) has a good healing effect in insertion desmitis/tendinitis. It is successfully used to disintegrate calcific deposits in tendons and ligaments. This study shows indication, technical requirements and an up to 12 months follow-up for 209 horses treated with ESW.

Treated by ESWT were 124 horses with fore- or hindlimb high suspensory desmitis (HSD) and 85 horses with other forms of desmitis. ESWT was performed on the standing deeply sedated horse under ultrasonographic guidance (7.5 MHz). The shock frequency applied was 2000 shocks/treatment and the effective energy for threshold ranged between 0.07 - 0.17 mJ/mm². The treatment was performed one to three times in one to three week intervals.

104 (83%) out of 124 horses with HSD were sound for more than 6 months or showed an improvement of their lameness. 20 horses (17%) did not improve or did slightly improve. 48 (56%) out of 85 horses with other desmitis became sound, 12 horses (14%) showed an improvement and 25 horses (30%) did not improve. ESWT, a minimally invasive, cosmetic, low-risk method in the treatment of insertion tendopathiae, is tolerated by horses very well. Side effects such as hematoma or inflammation were rare. After ESWT no clinical hospitalisation and box rest was required. All horses were walked the day after ESWT.

The study proves that ESWT is an alternative therapy for insertion desmitis, especially in chronic cases, which did not respond to conservative treatment, but showed very good results after ESWT.