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A Tradition of Leadership and Excellence in Equine Medicine

Stifle radiographs

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It has been standard practice to take 2 views of the stifle. Think about it. We take 5 or 6 views of small joints like fetlocks and knees respectively. I have found that many OCD lesions on the dorsal or front of the femur do not show up on the standard lateral projection or if they are visible the lesion may not appear to be a fragment. As many of you are aware, lesions that have fragments are more likely to be criticized in a pre- or post-purchase exam. The problem is that if the films taken by your veterinarian or the veterinarian who has taken the repository films in question, fail to show the lesion or fail to show that there is a fragment present and the films taken by the next veterinarian (after you now own the horse) do show the lesion or fragment, you stand to lose economically.

My suggestion is that you either request that oblique views be taken in all cases or at least in those cases where your veterinarian finds a lesion or is suspicious that there may be one present. One has to weigh the cost versus the information gained. We should all realize that no matter how many radiographs are taken, some lesions could be missed, but 2 views of such a large joint, as the stifle is very potentially inadequate.



P.S. Many of you may remember that we did a project 3 years ago in which we performed a periosteal stripping on one leg of 9 foals that had bilateral carpal valgus (knock-kneed) and left the other leg alone. All of the legs straightened with equal rapidity, showing that at least in the age group studied, periosteal stripping was of no benefit. There are other studies that have shown that periosteal stripping was of no value. Again, this does not mean that all foals will correct or that a high proportion of foals in all age groups will correct without some help. Many foals that are still crooked as weanlings or become crooked as weanlings or yearlings often need a transphyseal bridging to correct the problem. Many of these horses will be varus (bow-legged) and are likely to also have offset knees. Start looking for these problems any time, but especially starting in the fall through early spring. Try to get any surgery done on these horses by the time they are 12 months old