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Scintigraphy – Information for Owners

Your horse has been booked in for a **scintigraphic examination** or ‘**bone scan**’ which is a specialised diagnostic procedure carried out on a regular basis at Three Counties Equine Hospital.

The technique involves scanning a selected region of your horse, several hours after the intravenous injection of a small amount of a ‘bone-seeking’ radioactive substance (Technetium 99M). This binds to the skeleton to a greater degree at sites of injury or inflammation and this preferential uptake can be detected by a special scanner known as a gamma camera.

Your horse should arrive the day before scanning in order to allow him/her to settle in. Horses are stabled separately from the main stable block in order to prevent irradiation of our staff and other hospitalised patients. On the morning of the scan, the horse, whose relevant history is taken into account, is prepared as appropriate. This may involve a period of gentle lungeing or handwalking in those cases in which a fracture is not suspected. Horses are then rugged up and stable bandaged in order to maintain a good circulation. A catheter is placed in the jugular vein in the neck, using sedation if necessary. For safety and image quality hind shoes **MUST** be removed prior to the scan as well as front shoes if a fore limb scan or full body scan is requested.

At approximately 10am, the intravenous injection is administered. Scanning commences about two to three hours later. Horses are walked a short distance to the scanning room where they are lightly sedated via the catheter. Rugs and bandages are removed and scanning commences, which takes between one and three hours. This is normally carried out by vets Mark Georgetti, Becky Wall, Ed Shaw or Lauren Meredith plus a nurse and handler. Patients are then walked back to the stable where they must remain for 48 hours to allow radioactive levels to decline to a safe level for handling. Feed and water are offered as normal throughout.

Interpretation of the scan images is normally carried out as soon as possible within 24 to 48 hours of the scan taking place. Analysis takes up to three hours. For cases referred from other practices, results are communicated to your own vet as soon as available and are reported to you by your own vet. For our own clients, a telephone report is made as soon as possible.

In some horses, further tests may be necessary, as indicated by the results of scintigraphy. These might include nerve blocks, radiographs or an ultrasound scan of the affected area, which can be carried out by ourselves on the 3rd day post-scan. For referral cases, additional investigation is often carried out by your own practice, once the horse has returned home.

Horses may leave the hospital from 48 hours following injection of Technetium 99M. Thus a horse scanned on a Wednesday in which no further work up is necessary, will normally be safe to transport by 10am Friday.

We assure you that every effort will be made to ensure that your horse has a comfortable and stress-free stay at Three Counties Equine Hospital. Please do not hesitate to inform us of any special requirements or handling issues which will make this visit as safe as possible.

Three Counties Equine Hospital

