

Virginia Equine PLLC

Douglas K. Daniels, DVM Virginia M. DeChant, DVM

Heather D. Caplan, DVM

(804)270-1327

(804)784-5419

Post Joint Injection Guidelines

Generally, 2 ‘bad’ things can happen when you inject a joint: one is that the injection fails to fix your horse’s lameness for whatever reason. The second is that the injection introduces a contaminant and a joint infection ensues. Anytime you put a needle in a horse, whether it’s an intramuscular vaccination, intravenous sedation, a diagnostic nerve block, or a therapeutic joint injection, you run the risk of introducing an infection. Those risks can be minimized by using good aseptic technique but cannot be eliminated. Because the steroids that are commonly used in joint injections are powerful anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive agents, it could be days to weeks before the effects of such an infection are noted (pain, heat, swelling, lameness). Steroids are used in your joint injection because of their unmatched ability to halt joint pain. However, because they are immunosuppressive and alter your horse’s ability to fight infection, an antibiotic is also commonly included in your joint injection.

Your post-injection exercise protocol can vary widely: what was put in the joint, the joint involved, the specific requirements of the horse, and the veterinarian’s individual preferences are just some of the variables that need to be considered when this protocol is established. Generally speaking, our practice typically recommends 3 days of normal turn-out with no forced exercise or riding followed by 3 days of light riding (walk, trot with no collection, flatwork only), followed by full work/competition at 7 days post-injection. Depending on what products the joint injection was comprised of, improvement in lameness could continue for as long as 10-14 days post-injection. If at any time you are unsure that your horse’s condition is progressing normally or an increase in lameness is noted, contact your veterinarian immediately.