

Epiglottal Entrapment

Epiglottic entrapment is a relatively common disorder in the throat of the horse that can produce an obstruction to airflow, resulting in a respiratory noise when the horse exercises. Diagnosis is made with an endoscope passed down the horse's nose to look down the back of the throat. The abnormality is due to a membrane that normally lies under the larynx (voice box), which becomes dislocated to lie over the epiglottis, as is shown in the picture on the left.

The technique of choice to treat this condition involves cutting the membrane of tissue, so that it retracts and heals in the normal position. With the laser, the surgery can be performed through the endoscope with the horse standing and sedated. This results in a recurrence of less than 5% compared to up to 15% using a hooked knife.



Endoscopic appearance of a standardbred trotter with epiglottic entrapment and ulceration



The same horse 6 weeks following standing laser surgery. The epiglottis is free of entrapment and the horse is back in full work