TheHorse.com: Welcome to The Horse’s Equine Navicular Disease Webcast! The video presentation and our live chat will begin at 8 p.m., EST.

TheHorse.com: I’m your moderator, Michelle Anderson, digital managing editor of The Horse.

TheHorse.com: My own horse struggles with navicular, so I’ve enjoyed learning about the condition as we’ve put together this presentation and coordinated tonight’s event.

TheHorse.com: Please feel free to start sending in your questions!

I’m joined tonight by three experts to help answer your questions about navicular.

TheHorse.com: Dr. Josh Zacharias is the presenter you see in the video.

Josh Zacharias, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVS, ACVSMR, is an Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine graduate who practices at Countryside Large Animal Veterinary Services, in Greeley, Colorado. His interests include equine lameness, surgery, and podiatry. In addition to working as a surgeon and sports medicine specialist, Zacharias is a farrier with nearly 15 years of experience in therapeutic shoeing applications. Much of his caseload includes Western performance horses.

Dr. Josh Zacharias: It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you for joining us this evening.

TheHorse.com: Jill Stohs, DVM, is a technical services veterinarian with Dechra Veterinary Products. Stohs is originally from Missouri and completed both her Bachelor of Science in animal sciences and veterinary training at the University of Missouri. After receiving her doctorate of veterinary medicine, Stohs practiced at a four-doctor mixed animal clinic south of Kansas City. She joined Dechra in September 2013 and is a member of American Veterinary Medical Association, Missouri Veterinary Medical Association, Kansas City Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Equine Practitioners, and American Animal Hospital Association.

Dr. Jill Stohs: Thank you. I’m happy to be here.

TheHorse.com: We had so much interested in this topic that we’ve brought in a third panelist to help field your questions tonight.

TheHorse.com: Wade Shoemaker, DVM, is the owner as well as a veterinarian at Countryside Large Animal Veterinary Services, in Greeley, Colorado. He graduated from Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. His professional interests encompass performance horse issues. Additionally, he has worked as a professional farrier for the last 25 years. Outside of veterinary work, Shoemaker is an active participant in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: Thank you for the invitation to share this information.
Poll: What breed of horse do you currently own?
- Thoroughbred 11%
- Quarter Horse 57%
- Warmblood 3%
- Arabian 5%
- Other breed 19%
- I don’t own a horse 5%

TheHorse.com: IceKrystal asks: My horse has a bone chip in his right front foot from navicular. I feel it is a poor choice to operate. What does this do to his comfort level and career?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: A “bone chip” relating to the navicular bone would most likely be fragmentation off the distal border of the navicular bone. If this is the case, these would be inoperable. If, however, there is a chip associated with the coffin joint, there may be surgical measures that may be beneficial. The comfort level may vary.

TheHorse.com: IceKrystal asks: My horse has navicular in both front feet--how concerned should I be about his hind feet? There have been no symptoms in the hinds as of yet.

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: Few horses have symptoms in the hind feet as well. I would not have concern about it becoming an issue.

TheHorse.com: IceKrystal asks: What sort of jobs can unrideable horses hold?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Your horse may play a pivotal role as a therapy horse. There are many different programs throughout the nation that utilize horses to help children and adults with physical and emotional disabilities.

TheHorse.com: Caudal heel pain, navicular disease, navicular syndrome, is there a difference, or are these all the same condition?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: These terms are similar in meaning; however, technically they are different. Caudal heel pain is typically used to describe pain from the heel or back of the foot. They would respond positively to a palmar digital nerve block. The navicular structures are often included, but could also have pain associated with other structures. Navicular disease is usually used to describe disease that has caused radiographic changes to the navicular bone. Navicular syndrome is more encompassing to describe lesions associated with the navicular soft tissue structures and may not have radiographic abnormalities. Having said this, all three terms are commonly used interchangeably depending on veterinarian preference.

TheHorse.com: Ann from Vancouver, BC, asks: Does navicular present differently in a horse than laminitis or founder? We talk about the “classic founder stance.” Do navicular horses often stand with front legs extended as well?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Most horses with navicular typically begin to show subtle signs of lameness that progress with time, although acute lameness can occur. The lameness is typically bilateral (both front feet), but often appears to be worse in one front foot as compared to the other. Horses with navicular syndrome try to avoid excessive weight loading on their heels and often display a short, choppy stride, have difficulty turning in a circle or trotting on hard surfaces. Pointing the toe or alternating pointing their front limbs is considered a classic sign of navicular syndrome.
TheHorse.com: Rose in New York asks: At what age do we generally start seeing navicular?

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: This can happen at any age depending on the use, conformation, foot care, and environment.

TheHorse.com: Ashley asks: I would like to hear any insight on a navicular cyst and if Osphos could help with this.

Dr. Josh Zacharias: A navicular cyst is the loss of bone mineral in a focal area of the navicular bone. Osphos is a bisphosphonate that will reduce the mineral resorption. It has a significant effect on pain associated with bone as well as decreasing progression of cyst enlargement. The cyst may or may not fill in with treatment.

TheHorse.com: Alayne in Virginia asks: Can naproxen sodium be used for pain and discomfort?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: Naproxen is labeled for equine use in the U.S. It can be effective and “relatively” safe compared to some of the other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. The commercial product, however, has not been available recently.

TheHorse.com: Emily Naylor asks: I have a 4-year-old Quarter Horse whom I barrel race. In his prepurchase exam it showed he has small lollipop lesions on one navicular bone. He is barefoot, should he be shod to prevent further development of the lesions? (He has super hard feet.)

Dr. Jill Stohs: If your horse has normal hoof conformation, regular trimming may be all that is needed for your horse to maintain soundness. Continue to consult with your veterinarian and your farrier for their help.

Poll: Do you currently own a horse that has been diagnosed with navicular syndrome?
   Yes, in both front feet 50%
   Yes, only in one front foot 18%
   No, I don’t own a horse with navicular syndrome 20%
   I don’t own, but I have owned a horse with navicular disease in one or both feet in the past. 5%
   I don’t own a horse. 8%

TheHorse.com: Alice asks: My horse is a 7-year-old Irish sport horse who was diagnosed with degenerative navicular in both front feet. She was given a course of Tilden and injections in both front feet. I pulled her shoes, and she's been going good. Started a little jumping and so far so good. Wondering what type of exercises you might recommend to help her?

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: Keeping that type of horse in consistent work may be the best thing you can do for her longevity. I would suggest continuing on the exercise program that you have been using. The most important thing is to be aware of changes in the comfort and soundness of your individual. I would recommend having your veterinarian and trainer meet and weigh in on the appropriate work load for her.

TheHorse.com: G Richards asks: I have a Quarter Horse mare that had an abscess in her front foot 11 years ago. The abscess festered and eventually ate away the back layer of her navicular bone. She’s been slightly lame ever since and has never been able to be a performance horse. Is there anything to do to help her and be a more “rideable” horse?
Dr. Josh Zacharias: Abscess formation that travels deep into the coffin joint or navicular structures can be very devastating. Degeneration of the synovial structures and cartilage may be irreparable. These should be considered different from “navicular disease.” Corrective shoeing to support the structures in the back of the foot and potentially injections could be beneficial.

TheHorse.com: Sue McKinney asks: I have a 14-year-old Quarter Horse mare diagnosed with navicular. We have tried corrective shoeing and Osphos. She still has more bad days than good. Is nerving the only option we have left?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Most horses do not show clinical improvement until 30-60 days post-treatment with Osphos. However, if your horse does not respond to this therapy I would recommend revaluation of the soft tissue structures of the foot. Remember navicular syndrome involves both bony and soft tissue damage.

TheHorse.com: John asks: What is your opinion on using wedge pads?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: Wedge pads can be very rewarding in some cases. The biggest concerns with wedged heeled shoeing is the potential to “crush” heels. It is important to trim the heels to the widest point of the frog and not use the natural heel height to elevate. Longer heels become weak and will eventually underrun or crush. Raising heels artificially through a pad or wedge heeled shoe can reduce tension on the deep flexor tendon and the navicular structures. Some horse may become more painful due to quicker heel strike however, so monitor your horse when transitioning into wedges.

TheHorse.com: Suzy asks: Are X rays needed to confirm navicular issues?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Some type of diagnostic imaging to evaluate the navicular bone is required to establish a diagnosis of navicular syndrome. The imaging modalities can include X rays, MRI, CT, and nuclear scintigraphy.

TheHorse.com: Dyls Mom asks: Took a while to get my horse somewhat comfortable but finally did it ... he is rideable for short periods of time ... he's so much happier when he's working. I was worried at first about working him and considered retiring him but after two years we've finally got the shoeing and medication right. He's 18 but acts like he's 8. I thought navicular was a death sentence but it has not been.

Dr. Jill Stohs: In the past a diagnosis of navicular syndrome was thought to be career-ending for the horse; however, with new advances in research and treatments this disorder can be manageable. Glad to hear your horse is doing well.

TheHorse.com: Melanie asks: My 8-year-old Hanoverian is shown to have an “irregular navicular skyline.” He is currently sound. Is he doomed to develop navicular disease? Can anything help prevent it?

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: It is important to remember that although radiographs are a wonderful and important tool for prognosis evaluations, they do not show pain. Consequently, the horse is the one that has the answers in his level of comfort. As with any horse it is paramount to maintain proper hoof care; that is your best preventative.

TheHorse.com: From Alice: Can diet or supplements help?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: A properly balanced diet is always beneficial for the health of the horse. The mineral and vitamin requirements are important for joint and tissue health. There are various supplements-
-both oral and parenteral or injectable--that can be beneficial for joint or navicular diseases. The joint
supplements that have HA, PSGAGs, or other similar class of compounds can be helpful. The clinical
response, however, may be variable (i.e., supplements alone may not cause a significant of reduction of
lameness, but would likely be helpful for reduction of disease progression, etc.).

Poll: Are you currently treating your horse for navicular syndrome?
  Yes I treat with an intramuscular bisphosphonate 10%
  Yes I treat with non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS) 17%
  Yes I treat with an intravenous or regional limb perfusion treatment 5%
  Yes I treat with isoxsuprine tablets 10%
  Yes, other treatment 17%
  No, I’m not treating a horse with navicular syndrome 41%

TheHorse.com: Loren asks: How frequently can the Osphos be given?

Dr. Jill Stohs: It can be re-administered as early as 3 months per label. However, it does not need to be
re-administered until clinical signs (lameness) reappear.

TheHorse.com: Dyls Mom asks: My vet said that on the X ray the navicular bone had worn to a point.
What would’ve caused this?

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: There are many reasons for radiographic changes. These would include but not be
limited to use, trauma, genetics, and hoof abnormalities. Most important would be managing for the
comfort and serviceability of the horse.

TheHorse.com: Ashley asks: A secondary question to my question earlier about a navicular cyst. Is it
common for a tear in the deep digital flexor tendon to cause a navicular cyst to develop?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: A DDFT tear would probably be unlikely to be the primary cause of cyst develop-
ment. Rather, the repetitive strain and other factors such as conformation may have led to cyst develop-
ment and potentially weakening or injuring of the DDFT.

TheHorse.com: From Alice: Can degenerative navicular disease be ‘cured’?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Unfortunately, no treatment currently has been shown to provide cure of navicular dis-
ease. To date, many treatment modalities can be used together to help decrease pain and delay further
destruction of the navicular bone and surrounding structures.

TheHorse.com: Lynn asks: Has Osphos been used successfully to treat some arthritic conditions, such as
bone spavin?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: Osphos is not labeled for bone spavin. However, tiludronate has been used and is
labeled for use to treat bone spavin in Europe for some time. There are reportedly good results with
this use. Osphos and Tildren are the same class of drugs. Theoretically there would be benefit there;
however, this would be off-label use of the drug.

TheHorse.com: Gen asks: My horse had a fracture through the front tip of the coffin bone. That particular hoof
is prone to very bad abscesses that become out of control. Can this hoof be a candidate for
navicular later down the road?
Dr. Wade Shoemaker: The P3 fracture will not necessarily predispose your horse for navicular later. However, anytime a horse is using his foot in a guarding or out of balance way of going there is concern for changes. I would have greater concern for his other, or good, foot as the support limb many times suffers the effects of a chronic foot causing more use of the normal.

TheHorse.com: Dyls Mom asks: What is Osphos?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Osphos is a FDA-approved bisphosphonate labeled for the control of signs associated with navicular syndrome. Bisphosphonates are a class of drugs that helps to regulate bone metabolism.

Poll: After treatment was your horse able to go back to work?
Yes, he returned to his regular routine. 37%
Yes, but not to his regular routine. 11%
No 7%
My horse is still undergoing treatment. 19%
Other 26%

TheHorse.com: Gen asks: I have had a farrier say there is no such thing as “angle degrees” while I have had a vet say to keep my horse at a specific angle. Are there really angles you can keep your horse at to help relieve problems associated with the hooves?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: There are different schools of thoughts in regards to angles of the foot. Both are right—or in other words, it is personal preference of the farrier. Taking angles of the hoof is a way to keep communication between farrier and vet accurate; however, angles can change between shoeings (i.e., we may decrease heel elevation as the horse improves). The angles of the foot that your vet is referring to is the angle of the toe— the angle of the front of the hoof in relation to the sole or ground surface.

TheHorse.com: The doctors are busy responding to your questions!

TheHorse.com: Emily Naylor asks: I have heard navicular disease and navicular syndrome. Are they the same? Someone told me one is the kind born with and the other is developed by low heels.

Dr. Jill Stohs: Disease is a term used to describe a single problem that can be treated with a specific therapy. The definition of navicular syndrome helps to highlight that multiple structures are involved in the disorder and that more than one therapy is needed to help address the problems.

TheHorse.com: Gen asks: My horse has contracted heels. My original farrier kept my horse in a size 3 but my current farrier has kept my horse in a size 2. He has developed contracted heels. Can getting him back in a size 3 allow the heels to open back up.

Dr. Josh Zacharias: I usually don’t get hung up on shoe size as long as the foot is being trimmed properly. I think the reverse is more likely: getting the heels opened up, engaging the frog and heels, etc. will eventually get the horse in his “normal” sized shoe (the 3).

TheHorse.com: Guest asks: I have 15-year-old Morgan that has been diagnosed with caudal heel. How can I make him more comfortable and rideable?
Dr. Wade Shoemaker: There are many tools in the toolbox for managing the horse that has caudal heel pain. They include proper therapeutic farrier care, diagnostic images, products such as Osphos and/or isoxsuprine, and potentially treating the coffin joint pain that many times accompanies heel pain. It is important to first properly diagnose the area of pain for this individual and then step by step make changes until the proper combination is found that makes him the most comfortable.

Kathy: Does navicular make a horse more prone to hoof abscesses?

Dr. Jill Stohs: There is no known correlation that navicular syndrome predisposes horses to hoof abscesses.

TheHorse.com: Melanie asks: Can we get a copy of this webcast? Or of the slides? Very helpful!

TheHorse.com: Thank you for joining our webcast! We are glad you find the information helpful! The archive video of the webcast will be available for on-demand play a little later this evening on TheHorse.com, following the live event. http://www.thehorse.com/videos/webcasts/35092/equine-navicular-disease

TheHorse.com: Guest asks: Would you give a 26-year-old Arabian an injection of Osphos for a bony cyst in the left front foot? He is pasture-sound and has been barefoot for 10 years. I ride him lightly 2-3 times a week.

Dr. Josh Zacharias: If the horse is “stable” and sound enough for your desired use, I would hesitate to treat the horse with bisphosphonates. If you feel like the horse is still significantly lame for the intended use, I would recommend rechecking the radiographs and discuss treatment with your veterinarian.

TheHorse.com: Gen asks: Will questions and answers also be available in the webcast archive?

TheHorse.com: Yes, this chat will be archived and posted with the video.

TheHorse.com: John asks: how much can you tell with hoof testers regarding navicular?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Hoof testers are part of the lameness evaluation that can help your veterinarian determine location of pain in the foot. Horses suffering from navicular syndrome usually show pain on the back portion of the foot when hoof testers are applied about 50% of the time.

TheHorse.com: CHendricks asks: I have a 16-year-old Paint mare that was diagnosed with bone spurs on her navicular bone. My vet injected her feet to reduce inflammation. My farrier currently shoes her in a regular shoe but said he just allows her toe to have good “break over.” However, I noticed lately that she trips periodically while riding and this is not like her. Is this a sign that her feet bother her or perhaps her shoeing needs to be changed? Is there anything I can do to ensure she is remains comfortable or signs I should watch for that say she is not? My vet has cleared her to return to barrel racing almost a full year ago.

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: It may be beneficial to have a meeting with your veterinarian and farrier to watch your mare go, as a team. Then you can decide if perhaps the breakover is too quick, or the horse has some pain that she is guarding against and causing the tripping. One thing that I would encourage would be to investigate the potential coffin joint pain as this is a common area of issue in the barrel athlete as well as the horse that has experienced heel pain.

TheHorse.com: We have 10 minutes left in our presentation. Please feel free to continue sending in your questions!
TheHorse.com: Deb in New York asks: My question relates to the use of the drug Osphos. I am currently administering Bute and gabapentin to my 29-year-old gelding. He was used for pleasure riding and is now retired. When switching to Osphos would one of the former medications still be used in conjunction for continued pain relief until the effects of Osphos can be observed? And if so, in general for how long?

Dr. Jill Stohs: If your horse has significant pain and lameness your veterinarian may recommend that your horse remain on those medications until improvement is noticed following treatment with Osphos. Most horses begin to show improvement of their lameness between 1 and 2 months post-Osphos administration. Work with your veterinarian to determine the best plan for your horse.

TheHorse.com: Gen asks: My horse had a fracture in his left front hoof. It abscessed so bad the hoof wall almost came off. Thankfully, through vet and farrier treatment, he recovered. However, that same foot abscesses severely about every 3 years. Will that hoof with the coffin bone fracture history continue to abscess and can it lead to navicular?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: Some chronic P3 fractures may still produce an abscess if nonhealing or infected; however, most should not. Navicular disease typically would not develop from a previous coffin bone fracture, unless there is a change in foot conformation or the manner in how the horse uses the limb.

TheHorse.com: Guest asks: Will a 1 gm of bute a day cause ulcers?

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: While many horses in the world are on one gram of Bute per day and do not suffer gastric ulcers, it is no guarantee that it won’t. We have to remember that using any anti-inflammatory for a long enough duration can reduce the ability of the gastric stomach to protect itself and cause ulcer conditions. It is important to listen to the horse and monitor its comfort and symptoms.

TheHorse.com: Kathy asks: My mare, who had very severe navicular, began having persistent hoof abscesses and ended up with a pastern joint infection and laminitis. She also had Cushing’s disease, due to her age of 31. Obviously, she was humanely euthanized. Do you think the abscesses and laminitis were a result of the navicular or the Cushing’s or a combination?

Dr. Jill Stohs: Navicular syndrome is not typically associated with hoof abscesses. I would consider the horse’s abscesses and laminitis were a result of your horse’s endocrine disorder.

TheHorse.com: Kathy asks: Can draft horses contract navicular syndrome?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: It is unlikely for a draft horse to develop navicular syndrome.

TheHorse.com: Ashley asks: How safe is Previcox for daily use for navicular. Is it better than giving Bute as far as ulcers, etc. are concerned?

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: The label dose for Firocoxib is .1 mg per kg. The challenges with Firocoxib use is that it is many times not dosed accurately and, thus, may either have less effectiveness or similar negative side effects on the gastric stomach as other NSAID products like Bute or Banamine. It should be noted that the only labeled Firocoxib for use in the horse is Equioxx Oral Paste. Although Previcox has been used extensively it is not labeled for use in the horse in the United States and due to the tablet formulation is quite difficult to accurately administer the label does.
TheHorse.com: Kathy says: I would like to thank all of you doctors for your time and effort providing this very helpful and informative webcast. We horse owners rely on you so much to help us take care of our babies. Thank you!!!!!!!!!!

TheHorse.com: Guest says: Thank you!!

TheHorse.com: Fannie asks: I have a 6-year-old Quarter Horse mare diagnosed by my veterinarian that she has sclerosis on the navicular bone. She's on oral isoxsuprine since a month and she's shoeing with natural-balance shoes to help her. Can you tell me what can I do to increase the health of the foot?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: Osphos would be a recommendation as a next step in my cases that present similarly. This would be directed therapy to the navicular bone directly, which can be a significant source of pain.

TheHorse.com: Melanie says: Thank you for the information!

TheHorse.com: Ashley says: Very informative! Thank you all for taking the time out to chat with us.

TheHorse.com: Emily Naylor says: Thanks

TheHorse.com: We have a few more questions that the doctors are currently answering. Thank you, docs, for your extra time tonight!

TheHorse.com: Guest asks: Are some lines of Quarter Horse more prone to navicular?

Dr. Jill Stohs: The only genetic study that has shown possible heritable correlation between studs and their offspring was in Dutch Warmbloods. There are no known Quarter Horse lines that have been determined to be prone to navicular syndrome.

TheHorse.com: Loren says: Thank you all for your time!

TheHorse.com: Liz asks: How safe is Isoxsuprine for long-term use. My mare has very successfully been on it for 2 years at 1/2 Tsp per day.

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: I have had many horses on Isoxsuprine for greater than 5 years. There are no negative side effects to Isoxsuprine use, and if your mare is doing well I would recommend not changing your therapy.

TheHorse.com: Guest asks: Excellent information! Thank you so much.

TheHorse.com: Guest asks: The other horse had X rays years ago that showed “roughening of the wing.” I have tried everything to get her sound except nerving and these new drugs. Would Tildren help? Is Osphos the same medication? If the horse gets the treatment, how long does she have to rest before she can be ridden?

Dr. Josh Zacharias: Tildren and Osphos are the same class of drugs--both are bisphosphonates but are technically not the same. Tildren = tiludronate and Osphos = clodronate. Osphos is an intramuscularly administered medication while Tildren is given intravenously. Both have been proven effective for treatment of navicular disease. In my practice, I have been using Osphos and feel it has given significant positive results. Most horses can continue to stay in work. Results can usually be noticed as early as a couple weeks.
TheHorse.com: Thank you to the doctors for your time tonight! And thank you, audience, for your great questions!

TheHorse.com: Kathy says: I am very grateful for your doctors’ time tonight and a lot of great questions sent in from my fellow horse owners. Thanks, everybody!!!

TheHorse.com: Thank you also to our sponsor, Dechra, for bringing this event to you for FREE tonight!

Dr. Wade Shoemaker: Thank you for having us. Good luck with your equine partners.

Dr. Josh Zacharias: Thanks for joining us and for giving us the opportunity to share this information. Good night.

Dr. Jill Stohs: Thank you for all of your great questions and participation tonight. Thanks to the staff at TheHorse.com and Dr. Josh and Dr. Wade as well. Good night.

TheHorse.com: The full archive video, along with the chat transcript, will be available for on-demand play soon on TheHorse.com at http://www.thehorse.com/videos/webcasts/35092/equine-navicular-disease.

TheHorse.com: Good night everyone!