

# Five things to discuss with your vet

When you notice something isn't quite right with your horse, trust your instincts because they matter!

You're not overreacting, you're paying attention and that's a great starting point. Whether the change is subtle or obvious, preparing clear, thoughtful information for a conversation with your vet can make a huge difference in reaching a lameness diagnosis - efficiently and confidently.

Here's a checklist of things that will help make the most of that conversation:



## 1. Start with your horse's lameness story

You don't need perfect terminology, just start with the basics. A short, one-minute summary is often far more helpful than a long, anxious explanation. Include:

- When you first noticed the issue
- Whether it came on suddenly or gradually
- Whether it's consistent, improving, or worsening
- Any recent changes in footing, workload, saddle fit, rider, farriery, turnout, or routine

Even a simple: "This is when I first noticed it, and here's what seems to make it better or worse..." gives your vet a strong starting point.

 Check when complete

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## 2. Key details that will help your vet

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### Onset & progression

- Is the lameness acute: appearing suddenly, or insidious: creeping in over time?
- Has it changed? Is it better, worse, or the same?

### Exercise & performance clues

Notice whether your horse:

- Warms out of stiffness or becomes worse
- Shows behavioural changes under saddle: reluctant to pick up a certain lead, refusing jumps, bunny-hopping in canter, resisting movements

These clues can help localise whether any discomfort comes from limbs, back or core.

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## Surface & situation

Observe whether the problem is more noticeable in the following situations:

- On hard vs soft ground
- On a circle vs straight line
- On one rein vs the other
- When fresh vs tired

## Management & environment

Make a note of any changes in:

- Turnout routine (e.g. boxed vs 24/7 turnout)
- Footing quality
- Diet or exercise level

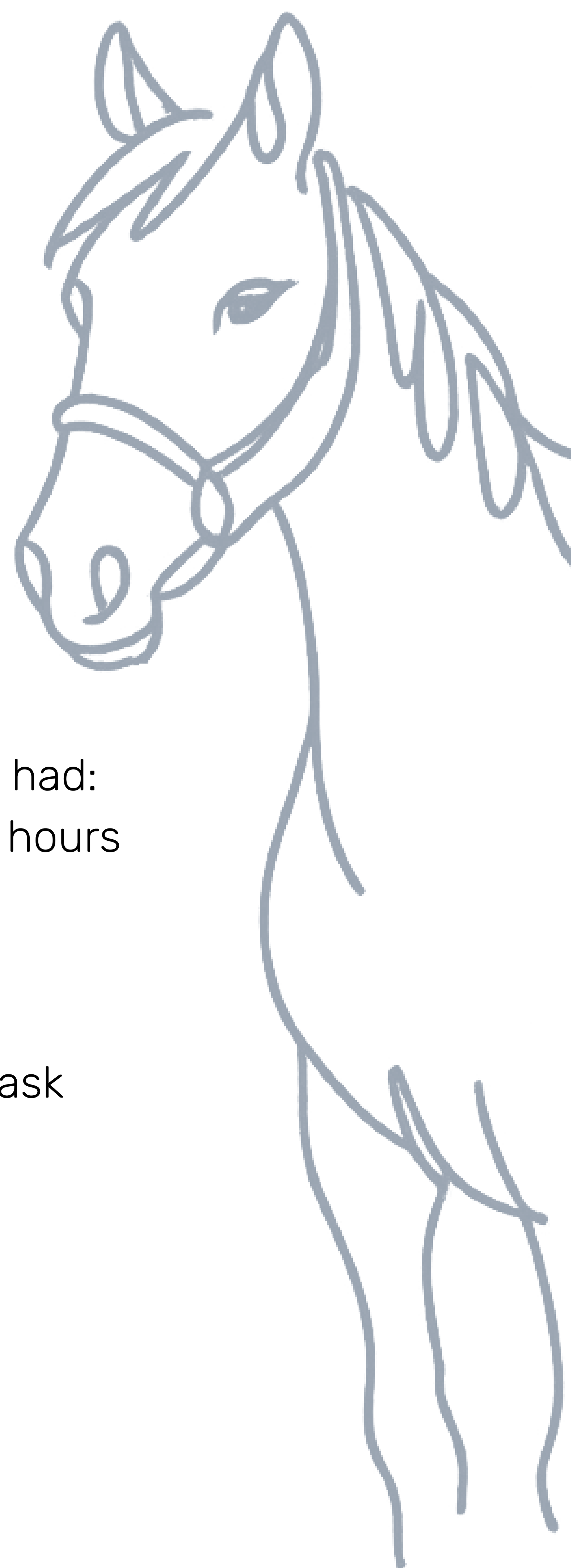
## Previous treatment or medication

Always share the notes and details if your horse has had:

- Any anti-inflammatory medication in the past 72 hours
- Any joint injections in the past month
- Any rest periods or prior interventions

This matters because medication can temporarily mask clinical signs.

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## 3. Ask what patterns to look for

Most owners naturally observe their horses closely – you and they are in a partnership after all – but a little structure to that observation will go a long way. Ask your vet if there is anything specific that they'd like you to track over the next few days. They may direct you to watch for differences between:

- Straight line vs circle
- Firm vs soft ground
- Before vs after warm-up
- Left rein vs right rein

Tracking repeatable patterns gives your vet clearer information and can stop the unhelpful spiral of second-guessing yourself.

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## 4. Use videos to support the conversation

Short, focused video clips are far more helpful than a long montage.

Before taking any footage it's wise to ask:

*"What angle or surface would you like me to film?"*

Most vets find these especially useful:

- Straight-line trot
- A circle on each rein
- A side-on view
- A short clip before and after exercise

Consistent footing and safe filming conditions matter more than perfection.

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## 5. Discuss next steps without worry

It's completely normal to feel nervous when asking about what happens next. But asking isn't about being pushy, it's being prepared. Feel confident in asking:

- *"What are we trying to rule in or out first?"*
- *"If today doesn't give us the full picture, what might the next step be?"*
- *"Is this something that might benefit from imaging, or is that too early?"*

A lameness work-up is a process, not a guess. Vets follow a systematic decision pathway and understanding that can help reduce anxiety.

## Check when complete

### A note on imaging for lameness

Sometimes the clinical exam gives your vet everything they need to know. Sometimes X-ray or ultrasound is the next logical step. Other times - especially when deep soft tissue structures are involved, imaging with MRI may be recommended. If imaging becomes part of the discussions, make sure that you ask:

- What question are we trying to answer?
- What will imaging change about diagnosis or treatment?

You're not requesting imaging at this stage but it's an option if needed and you're right to ask for clarity.

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## Your confidence checklist

If you only do three things before your vet visit, do these:

1. Prepare your horse's story: when it started, what you see, what has changed
2. Bring 2–3 short videos: taken in safe, consistent conditions
3. Have a few focused questions ready: so the conversation flows easily

You don't need to arrive with the answers but – hopefully – with the right questions, you'll leave with them!

## Final thoughts

You know your horse better than anyone. Your observations, even if they feel small or uncertain, are incredibly valuable. By gathering thoughtful details, observing patterns, and having an open conversation with your vet, you're giving your horse the best possible chance of getting the right diagnosis and the right treatment.

And if they could thank you, *they absolutely would.*

