

My filly previously has foundered, what can I do to help her stay healthy while racing and as a broodmare?



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Fraley was born in Central Kentucky but raised on a commercial cattle ranch in Western Colorado. He has been shoeing horses since age 15 after being introduced to the trade by local rancher Bill Walk. He received his D.V.M. from Colorado State University in 2004.

Upon graduation he completed a one-year internship at Pioneer Equine Hospital in Oakdale, California. Following his internship he spent 2½ years as an associate in the podiatry department at Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington. Fraley left Rood and Riddle to eventually open Fraley Equine Podiatry. Fraley Equine Podiatry is based out of the Hagyard Equine Medical Institute and is proud to be affiliated with the oldest and largest equine hospital in the world.

Fraley sits on the board of directors for the Kentucky Equine Humane Center and also is fortunate to work on many of horseracing's heroes that are retired at Old Friend's in Georgetown, Kentucky. Fraley has been actively involved in the AFA/AAEP Farrier Short Course which teaches basic farriery and promotes the veterinary/farrier relationship in U.S. veterinary schools.

In the last year, Fraley and his team have worked in conjunction with Pfizer Animal Health to present eight hands-on podiatry clinics at veterinary hospitals across the country. These clinics have been designed to foster the veterinary/farrier relationship while teaching modern techniques of Equine podiatry.

This is an excellent question and is a scenario I am faced with regularly in my practice. Dietary considerations are a very important part of the equation, but I will limit my comments to hoof care in an effort to be concise.

When your filly foundered (meaning the coffin bone actually rotated or sank), some permanent changes to the integrity of the laminae (thin layers of sensitive vascular tissue in the hoof of a horse) occurred. These changes to the laminae mean your filly is at greater risk of a relapse of laminitis than the general population. This does not mean she can't be a racehorse. It just means she needs some special attention along the way.

I would start by having your veterinarian and farrier examine the horse together. Radiographs of the feet may help them decide if her feet would withstand the rigors of racing. The heart of the horse has to be factored in here as well, as there are some very good racehorses with very bad feet. In some instances, it might be best to retire the horse so that you don't risk losing her broodmare potential altogether.

Assuming your filly's radiographic changes are not too severe, there are some shoeing modifications your vet and farrier could decide to implement. In general, most foundered horses benefit from shortening the digital break-over in one

of three ways: rockering, rolling, or squaring the toes. This decreases tension in the deep digital flexor tendon and consequently the laminae just before heel lift off. Finally, foundered horses tend to perform better with some type of sole and/or frog support. When a standard shoe is applied to the foundered foot, the sole often will prolapse, or drop down below the shoe, due to the weakened laminar attachment and typically thin soles. Heartbars, pour-in pads, and onion-heeled shoes are common support options to help prevent this. It is not uncommon for horses to be trained in therapeutic aids such as these and then be raced in more conventional shoes for traction and performance. Your filly may benefit from low-impact training methods to improve fitness with minimal deleterious effects on her feet. Swimming or Aqua-Tread are good options.

With regards to what you can do to keep her healthy as a broodmare I cannot emphasize enough the importance of annual radiographs for problem-footed horses. This allows you to monitor radiographic changes and intervene before there is a crisis. Finally, I prefer to keep foundered broodmares barefoot if possible. This is not always an option, but it ensures healthy frog contact and sole support. I hope this helps and best of luck with your filly!

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