



Tendonology®
Specialist Tendon Treatment for Racehorses

Document Three Grading of Pathology

At Tendonology we appreciate that tendon pathology presents in many different forms and often have a number of related biological factors that caused the condition. Therefore, it could be argued that every case presents with a unique set of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that have contributed to the pathology.

We accept that matching one case with another is unreliable from a clinical and scientific perspective. However, we felt that it would be useful to establish a guide so owners, trainers and vets would have a realistic, if rough guide to the estimated treatment time and prognosis for their particular case. Therefore, we have devised a simple grading classification to aid this process. We accept that it is a very broad guide. We request that all referring vets attribute a grade to the horse in their care being referred for treatment.

Grade I

If the condition matches all the following criteria:

- Horse of five years or younger
- Single fore leg pathology in the superficial digital flexor tendon SDFT
- The SDFT lesion accounts for $\leq 30\%$ of the affected cross-sectional area
- No previous history of tendon injury to either fore SDFT
- Not presenting as lame at walk

Estimated treatment time: Twelve weeks

General Prognosis based upon similar cases treated at Tendonology:

- Returning to racing: 90%
- Returning to racing: Within twelve months: 75%
- Horse remains sound after twelve months/four races: 84%
- Overall prognosis: Very good

Rationale:

- ✓ Younger horses respond to the treatment more quickly primarily because the regenerative cellular processes are more active in the younger horse.
- ✓ Single leg injuries present less of a problem to rehabilitate and therefore have a better prognosis
- ✓ In cases with smaller lesions there is less distortion of the tendon tissue matrix which improves the overall outcome

Grade II

A horse's condition will be a Grade II if the condition has any of the following in addition to, or to replace those in Grade I

- ✓ Horse is older than five years old
- ✓ Single fore leg pathology in the SDFT which accounts for 30% - 50% of the affected cross-sectional area of the SDFT or bilateral fore leg SDFT lesions which account for $\leq 30\%$ of the affected cross-sectional area of the SDFT
- ✓ No previous history of tendon injury to either fore SDFT
- ✓ Not presenting as lame at walk

Estimated treatment time: Twelve weeks – sixteen weeks

Generalised prognosis:

- 👤 Returning to racing: 60 – 70%
- 👤 Returning to racing: Within twelve months, 60%, within eighteen months, 72%
- 👤 Horse remains sound after twelve months/four races, 75%
- 👤 Overall prognosis: Good

Rationale:

- ✓ The degenerative process in the older horse will be more advanced than in a younger horse. Most degenerative pathologies in the SDFT are sub sensory and in the early stages and can not be detected with diagnostic ultrasound
- ✓ Older horses respond less quickly to the treatment primarily because the regenerative cellular processes are less active in the older horse
- ✓ In general terms, the larger the lesion the more distortion and disruption of the tendon tissue architecture which will compromise the overall prognosis

Grade III

A horse's condition will be a Grade III if the condition has any of the following in addition to or to replace those in Grade I or Grade II

- Bilateral fore leg pathology in the SDFT's in which pathology in one or both leg(s) accounts for $\geq 50\%$ the affected cross-sectional area of either SDFT
- A previous history of tendon injury to either fore SDFT
- Presenting as more than 5/10 lame at walk
- Gross enlargement of either SDFT defined as being \geq twice the normal dimension
- Previously fired or injected into the tendon substance

Estimated treatment time: Twenty weeks

Generalised prognosis:

- Returning to racing: 50%
- Returning to racing: Within twelve months; we would not recommend it, within eighteen months: 55%
- Horse remains sound after twelve months/four races: 62%
- Overall prognosis: Fair

Rationale:

🕒 Older horses respond less quickly to the treatment primarily because the regenerative cells are less active in the older horse.

🕒 Severe bilateral pathologies with over 50% structural damage present significant treatment and rehabilitation problems. At Tendonology we do not subscribe to the opinion that the chances of horses with this level of pathology have a less than 50% chance of ever racing again. However, returning the tendon to a fully functioning and durable unit takes an individual and patient approach based upon an accurate diagnosis and regular monitoring.