

Owner-Reported Prevalence of Hoof Abnormalities in Leisure Horses in the North West of the United Kingdom

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Background

Hoof abnormalities are common in horses and ponies. Hoof abnormalities can range from infections of the frog and sole to overall imbalance of the hoof in either the mediolateral or dorsopalmar plane. Risk factors for hoof abnormalities include conformation, age, breed, stable management and work pattern. Hoof abnormalities have implications for the future soundness of both professional and leisure horses and therefore are an important health and welfare parameter.

Objectives

- To establish the prevalence of hoof abnormalities in sound horses in the North West of the UK
- To determine common hoof abnormalities that affect leisure horses in the North West of the UK
- To determine the modes of treatment administered to remedy these hoof abnormalities.
- To determine what proportion of hoof abnormalities require long term treatment.

Method

Fifty-two leisure horses in the North West of England and North Wales were recruited to the study between June 2017 and February 2018. In order to be included in the study, horses had to be sound, in work and under the care of one of five specific farriers. Owners were recruited using postcards. Once the horses were deemed eligible to be included in the study, horse owners were asked to undertake an interview questionnaire on farriery and hoof care of their horse(s).

Results

Table 1 Number of horses affected by one or more hoof abnormalities

Abnormalities per horse	No. Horses Affected	% of Population
None	27	51.9
≥1	25	48.1
≥2	5	9.62
≥3	1	1.92
Total	52	100

Fig. 1 Hoof with underrun heels

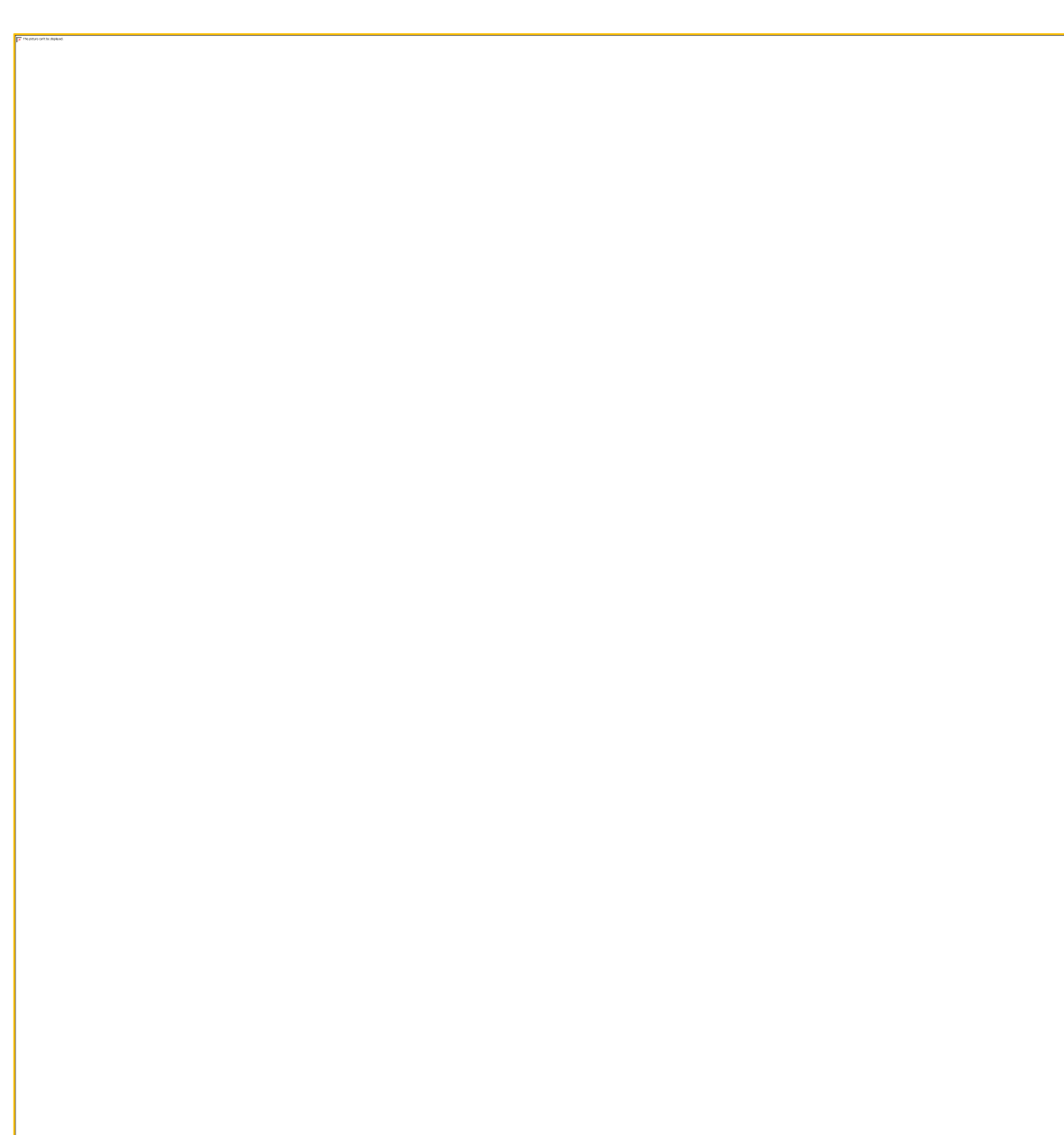


Fig.2 Commonly reported treatments for hoof abnormalities

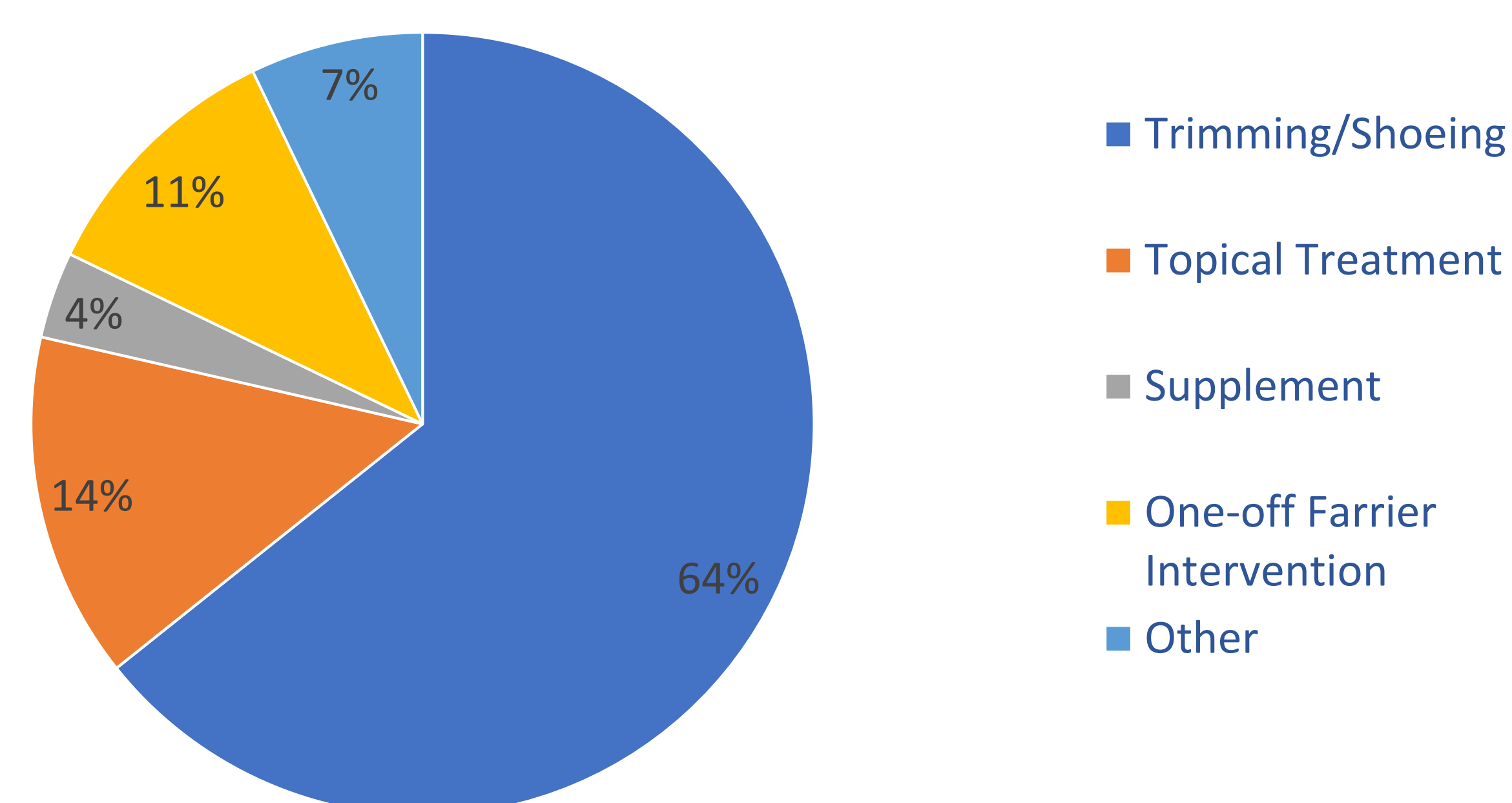


Fig 3 Example of a hoof with crumbling horn

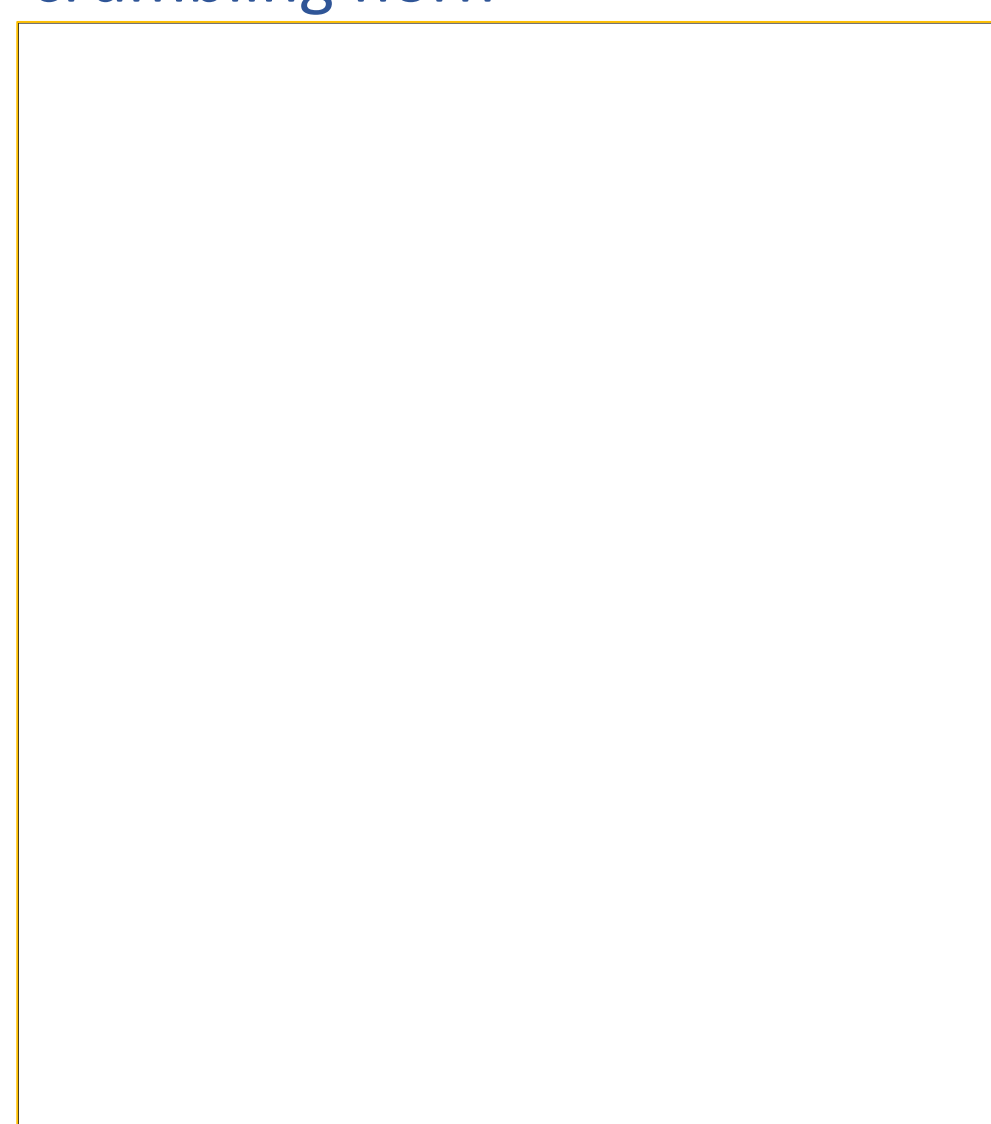
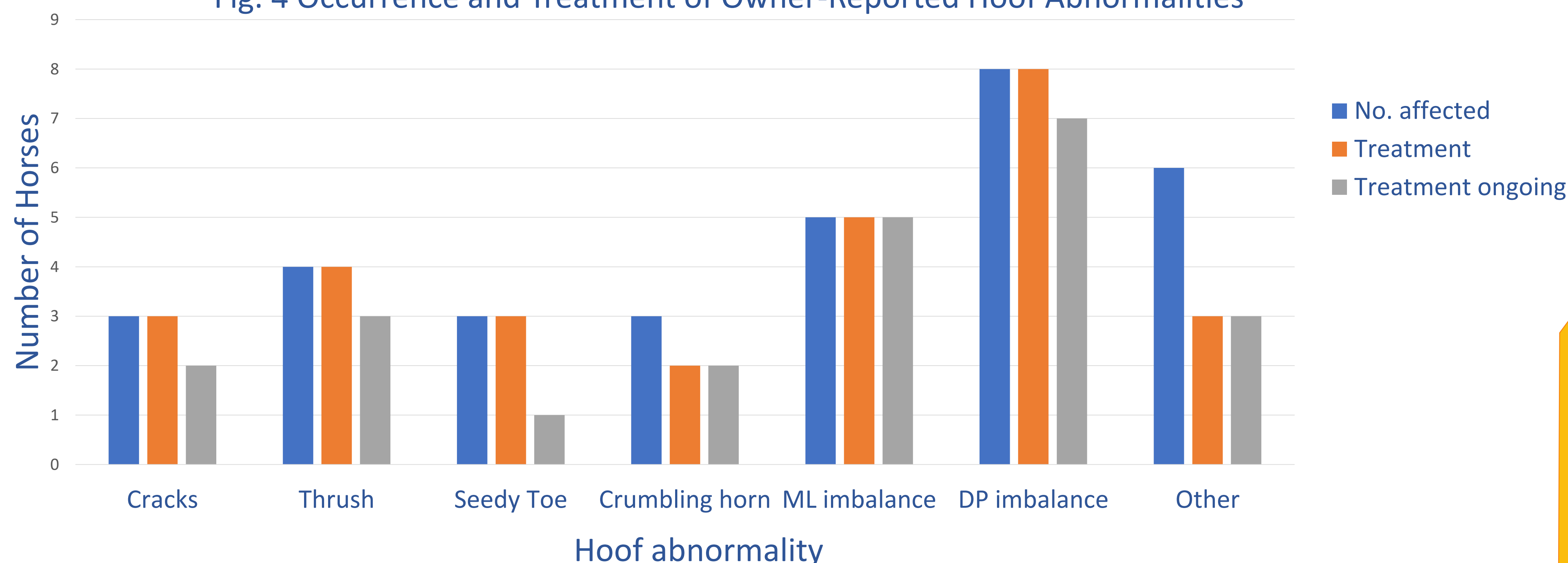


Fig. 4 Occurrence and Treatment of Owner-Reported Hoof Abnormalities



Conclusions

- Upto 50% of sound horses can be affected by hoof abnormalities
- Hoof imbalance is the most commonly reported abnormality.
- The vast majority of hoof abnormalities are treated by the owner or farrier.
- Long term treatment is required in the management of a large proportion of hoof abnormalities.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to my funding body, The Horse Trust, and to my supervisors. Also to the horse owners and farriers that have contributed to this study.