

Spring Joint Health in Horses

Veterinary Communication Strategies to Improve Owner Compliance

Spring is a predictable time for joint stiffness and lameness to become noticeable. Increased activity, reduced winter conditioning, and changing footing make this an ideal season for veterinarians to educate owners, normalize early intervention, and improve compliance with joint care recommendations.

Leverage Seasonality to Open the Conversation

- Increased movement and training after winter downtime
- Less-conditioned joints and supporting tissues
- Variable footing that increases joint stress

When owners understand why spring issues are common, they are more receptive to preventive care.

Link Clinical Findings to What Owners See

- Stiffness at the start of work
- Shortened stride or reluctance
- Changes in attitude or performance

Frame joint care as adaptation and maintenance, not aging or irreversible damage.

Tailor the Message by Horse Type

Performance Horses: Emphasize spring evaluation, training alignment, and longevity.

Pleasure Horses: Focus on comfort, safety, enjoyment, and gradual return to work.

Present Joint Care as a Tiered Plan

- Conditioning and workload adjustment
- Hoof balance and farrier coordination
- Nutritional joint support
- Medical or procedural intervention when indicated

Tiered options reduce overwhelm and improve follow-through.

Set Expectations and Encourage Partnership

- Joint care is ongoing management
- Improvement takes weeks, not days
- Seasonal flare-ups are common and manageable

Encourage owners to report stiffness, stride changes, heat, or swelling.

Key Takeaway

Spring joint conversations are a high-impact compliance opportunity. Clear seasonal framing and practical recommendations improve adherence, strengthen trust, and support long-term equine soundness.

