

What is an MRI scan?

An MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan is a procedure that involves the use of a purpose built magnet. A horse's limb can be placed into this so that images can be acquired in the standing position.

Preparation for an MRI scan

On arrival at RVC Equine, your horse will be unloaded by one of our technicians and weighed (enabling an accurate calculation of the drug dose for sedation during the scan). The clinician dealing with your horse will discuss the history of your horse's problem with you. You will also be asked to sign a consent form.

Your horse will have a clinical examination by a veterinary surgeon including a basic gait evaluation. To facilitate repeat sedation doses, a short-stay intravenous catheter will be placed into the neck vein. It is standard practice to clip and sterilise the area prior to catheter insertion. Additional nerve blocks may be required prior to the scan if requested by your referring veterinary surgeon.

To allow safe placement of the limb into the magnet both front or hind shoes (depending on the limb being imaged) must be removed. This is due to the both the proximity of the horse's foot with the magnet and that images will appear distorted if metal remains present.

Procedure for an MRI scan

The MRI scan is performed in the MRI suite with your horse sedated to reduce movement during the scan. Multiple scans are obtained in different orientations to enable detailed visualisation of the soft tissues and bone. This is a lengthy procedure that can take up to 4-5 hours depending on the areas scanned, however it does vary between horses depending on their willingness to stand still for a long period of time.

After the scan

The intravenous catheter is removed on completion of the scan. Your horse will be moved into a box to recover from the sedation before being discharged from the hospital (imaging only day case).

The MRI images will be evaluated by the RVC's radiologist who will discuss the findings with the clinician in charge of your horse.

Discharge instructions

You will be given written discharge instructions summarising the care of your horse following sedation. If further investigation or work is required, your horse will be admitted to our stables.

For further information, please contact the RVC Equine team in person or by phone.

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