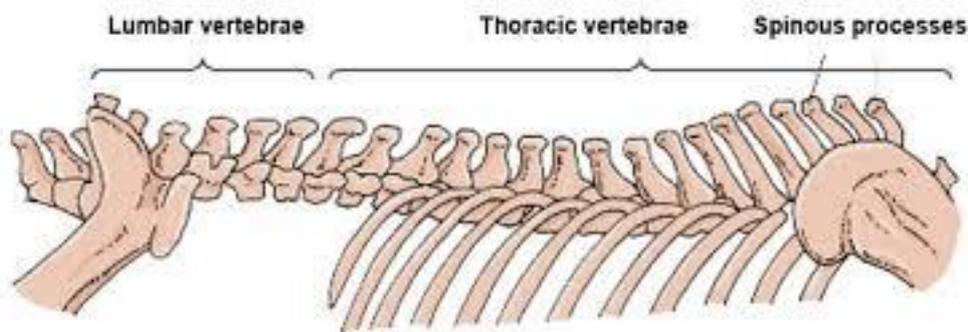


## OVERRIDING DORSAL SPINOUS PROCESSES (ORDSP)

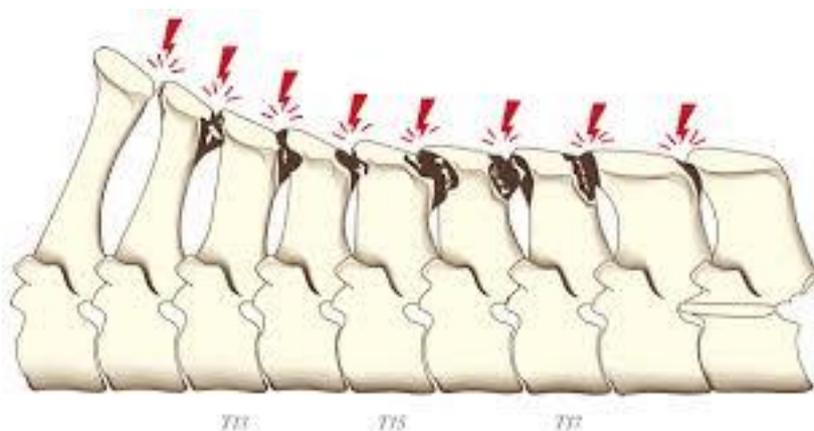
Overriding Dorsal Spinous Processes (ORDSP) or “Kissing Spines”, as it is more commonly known, is the narrowing of space between adjacent dorsal spinous processes of the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae. The dorsal spinous process is the vertical part of the vertebrae that projects upwards and should be evenly spaced. It is potentially more common in jumping and dressage horses with a breed preference for Thoroughbreds largely seen as an overrepresentation population in many studies. This back pathology is often located behind the withers where the rider sits and also behind the saddle.

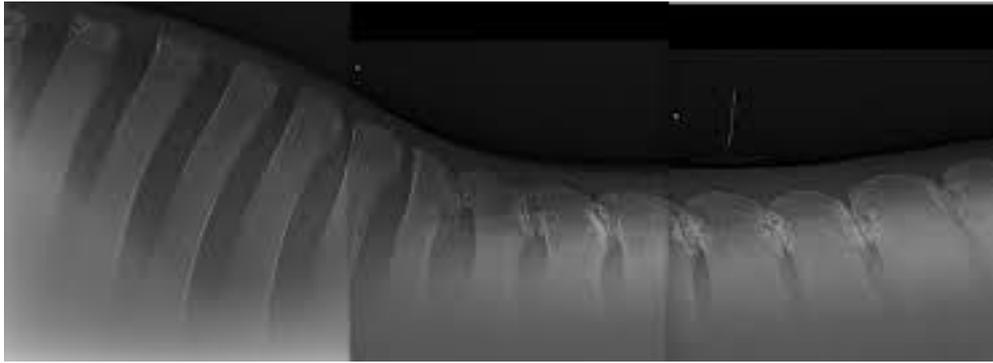


### Clinical signs include:

- avoidance behaviours
- refusing to accept bit contact
- refusing to jump
- hollow or not rounded through the back
- unwilling to bend to one direction
- not consistently picking up the correct lead
- Behavioural issues on the ground

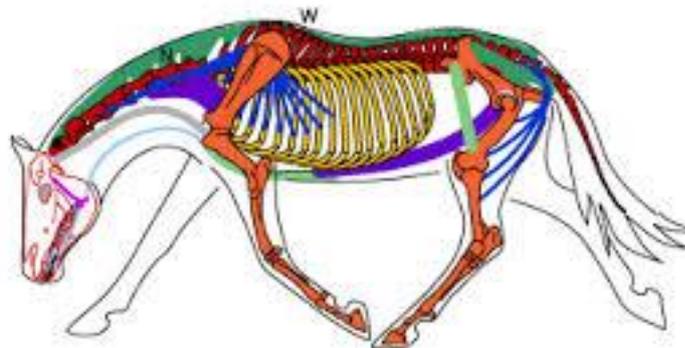
There is a wide variety in the clinical presentation of horses with ORDSP. It is important to note that the severity of the clinical signs does not necessarily correspond to severity of pathology and some horses can still perform and remain in regular work with ORDSP.





Diagnosis of ORDSP based on performing lateral radiographs of thoracic and lumbar regions to assess the relationship between the dorsal spinous processes. Ultrasound can also be used to assess the bone surfaces, surrounding soft tissue and ligaments, as back soreness is often associated with inflammation of these structures. Due to the nature of this disease radiographic and ultrasonographic findings of ORDSP alone are not enough to definitively establish this as a cause for behavioural issues. Your veterinarian needs to assess the history, clinical findings and diagnostic imaging when making a conclusion. Nuclear scintigraphy (bone scan) enables assessment of active inflammation surrounding the ORDSPs through measurement of active bone remodeling or increased blood flow and is likely to be more definitive. It is important to assess the presence of inflammation, as many ORDSP lesions identified by radiographs may be dormant and cause no clinical issues.

NATURAL POSITION OF AN UNRIDDED HORSE  
ON THE FREE LONGE



### Treatment

Exercise and stretching are essential in the treatment of ORDSP, however, your veterinarian may also recommend the use of the following:

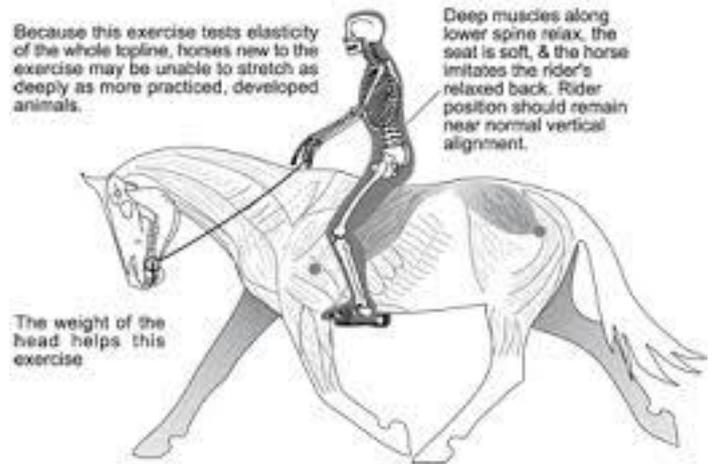
- Acupuncture
- Corticosteroid injections
- Tildren
- Shockwave therapy
- Mesotherapy
- Surgery

Exercises typically involve a slow introduction to work (after a period of rest) encouraging a long and low frame within all gaits and then to include pole and cavaletti work. This aims to encourage the horse to flex round and open up through the back thereby increasing space between dorsal processes in the spinal column. A daily stretching routine involving carrot

exercises is also important to improve stretch over the topline, increase flexibility and improve core strength.

It is a slow and steady process back to full work and return to previous levels of athletic performance may not always be possible particularly involving jumping disciplines. In our practice alone, we have seen good results with perseverance and dedication to following a strict rehabilitation program in conjunction with other treatments. Therefore, we do not strictly consider the diagnosis of ORDSPs retirement worthy.

We strongly recommend speaking to your regular veterinarian if you suspect your horse has ORDSP as diagnosis is the first step to improving your horse's comfort, performance and ultimately quality of life.



**If you have any questions or concerns please contact us on 0412 619 740.**