

Occipitoatlantoaxial Malformation (OAAM). This is a condition where the cervical vertebrae fuse together in the neck and at the base of the skull, causing compression and injury to the spinal cord. Clinical signs range from mild in-coordination to the paralysis of both front and rear legs. Some affected foals cannot stand to nurse, in others the clinical signs may not be seen for several weeks. This is the only cervical spinal cord disease seen in horses less than 1 month of age, and a radiograph can diagnose the condition. There is no genetic test for OAAM, and the hereditary component of this condition is not well researched at present, although some researchers have suggested that it is an autosomal recessive trait. "Autosomal" means the trait is not sex linked, and "recessive" means that in order for a foal to be affected, it must have 2 copies of the mutated allele, receiving one copy from each parent.

Reference Material

1. [Watson AG, Mayhew IG. "Familial congenital occipitoatlantoaxial malformation \(OAAM\) in the Arabian horse." *Spine* 1986 May;11\(4\):334-9](#)

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