



September 2017

# Sapphire Syndicates

**T**he veterinary report for **Crown Leah** basically stated that, in layman's terms, she has very immature knees — and one particular that can arise from this is only coming to light now. She has a spur which causes a little bit of pain under duress (see page 2). Basically her knees need time to mature, as the bones need to densify and harden up, which means an extended period of downtime — possibly about three months.

I have expressed individually to some of the Sapphire members, and would also like to say to the other members, that I am very happy to extend the syndicate arrangement for the two fillies — to keep them on the team and to keep the Sapphire Bravo Syndicate together. It's a tight-knit syndicate, with our five members in New York, our Dublin-based member, and ourselves, so, in due course I will put together a proposal for the extension of the original terms. The consensus, as far as I have gleaned so far, would suggest that this proposal would be welcomed to allow the potential of the two fillies to be realised.

**Quinn's Red Rose** is getting on really well and as Majella's recent video of her cantering shows, she looks fantastic. I mentioned before how much she has matured during her time off and I think it's worth mentioning again in the light of Perfect Soldier's win for the Michael O'Callaghan Racing Club at Galway. As a two-year-old, Perfect Soldier finished third at the Curragh on his debut. He had a setback following his second run, which was very similar in nature to Crown Leah's. We put him away, and when he came back this year — stronger and more mature — he won on his fourth run of the season, and has also run twice since, his leg now a thing of the past. If I had persevered with him as a two-year-old he may have broken down, and we wouldn't have had that huge day to remember in Galway. It's a good example of the benefits of patience and time with horses.



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Basically, if our Sapphire Bravo horses were not showing the promise that they are showing, I would be suggesting getting rid of them, as I am personally invested in them more than anybody else, but I really believe that they are two lovely fillies worth giving time to.

I will emphasise that we will need to be patient with Quinn's Red Rose. We have already given her the time she needs to get to where she is now, so there is no point in undoing all that effort by rushing her now. With Dundalk continuing to race throughout the winter, the season never ends these days, so there is no fear of not having a race for her when she does come to hand.

Horses are not machines, and when you have issues you just have to take it day by day. Quinn's has improved for her time off and fingers crossed she will be ready to run in the next couple of months.

**Michael O'Callaghan**

## *Veterinary surgeon Pat O’Sullivan from Troytown GreyAbbey Veterinary Hospital talks to us about common knee issues in young racehorses and discusses Crown Leah’s recent setback, and her recovery programme.*

**K**nees are joints that can give a lot of problems in racehorses. In general, knee-joint problems can be sub-classified into three categories: arthritis is one of the most common problems associated with knees; another is sub-chondral (underneath the cartilage) bone injury, where the bones of the knee, which are all covered in cartilage, are injured or bruised. The third classification would be fractures of various types. Fractures, however, don’t tend to happen in isolation, and are usually a progression from one of the previous two conditions.

A ‘spur’, which Crown Leah has, is an abnormal growth of bone which can occur as a result of what is called re-modelling. Re-modelling is almost exactly as it sounds – you get a change in the bone in response to a disease, which is more than often arthritis. An insult, or injury, to the diseased bone then causes the bone to change, and this very often manifests itself as a sharp point at the edge of the bone, which is called a ‘spur’.

When a spur is detected, what needs to be done depends a lot upon the individual injury, and on the bone affected, as different bones will have different treatment protocols recommended for them. Treatment can vary from a period of rest, to intra-articular medication – such as cortico-steroids or hyaluronic acid. Sometimes the knee will require surgery if, for instance, there is a free-floating fragment where one of the spurs has broken off. This fragment — regarded as a ‘chip’ fracture— will most likely necessitate surgery to remove the fractured fragment.

With less mature animals, time is a very important factor in knee-issue recovery. Bear in mind that two and three-year-old racehorses are still skeletally immature. Often times if you have evidence of early-stage changes, or bone that is at risk of further de-generation, the appropriate treatment is to give the animal a significant period of rest. This can allow the bones to strengthen up, and the sub-chondral bone beneath the cartilage, if damaged, to repair as much as is possible.



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Once a spur forms they are usually there for good, but having said that, just because a spur is present it doesn’t necessarily mean that the horse will not be able to perform athletically. A co-relation between x-ray findings and the soundness of the horse is not always absolute. Sometimes you look at a horse that is lame in its knees, but the x-rays are not so bad, and then you may see the x-rays of another horse that has quite big spurs, yet that horse can trot up sound. So there is not always a linear co-relation between what you see on an x-ray and what the comfort levels of an individual animal are.

With Crown Leah it was decided that a little bit of a break for her was the appropriate course of action, just to give the knee joint a chance to settle down. In other words, it is hoped that the spur that has been detected will not, ultimately, inhibit her athletic ability. If, however, the spur is causing problems when she begins to work again, there is always the option of intra-articular medication, usually cortisone, as mentioned above. This settles down the inflammation, makes the horse feel much better, and allows it to carry on being a racehorse.