

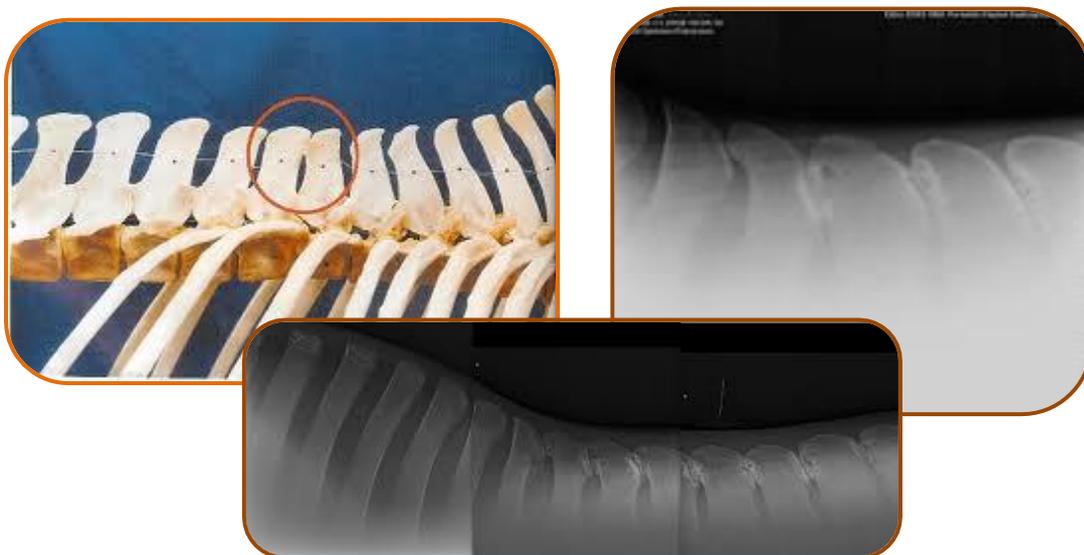
## The dreaded Kissing Spines – Riders point of view

Much has been written and is now known about this unfortunate skeletal back problem that many racehorses suffer from. Many believe that backing young horses before they are 2 years old and therefore skeletally very immature may start this painful condition to take hold and therefore cause years of pain and discomfort especially when the afflicted horse is ridden. The spinal processes that grow up from the vertebrae in the thoracic spine (just under the saddle) should have gaps between them so the horse can laterally flex his spine on a turn for example and therefore move freely with no pain. The x-rays below show no gaps in places, so everytime those particular horses have a riders weight on those areas, are asked to turn on a circle or work or simply just carry a rider they probably will feel quite a bit of pain and therefore will show signs of that pain.

At Moorcroft we regularly get horses in with very bad 'behavioural' reports being described as 'unride-able', 'unruly', 'a typical ex-racehorse', 'a lunatic' etc If it's a mare, well hormones are always blamed and 9 times out of 10 these horses have fabulous temperaments but have much back and neck pain. Often their caring previous owners have spent much money with various professional bodies trying desperately to get to the bottom of these 'behavioural' issues. Most of these horses have had every type of bit on the market used in their mouth as one of the biggest signs of Kissing Spines (see chart →) is much resistance in the contact and that can lead to problems stopping etc!

Ruling out Kissing Spines is very easy – **X-RAY** - but use an experienced vet who can read the images well and who will understand that the vertebral bodies below the Kissing Spine area (called Facet joints) also need to be looked at to eliminate any doubt of pain from this part of the spine. There are plenty of these good vets about so seek one out if you are being fobbed off. If you feel that YOUR horse has a back problem when you ride him or her, he or she probably has and you deserve to find out your options.

***I am hoping the chart on the next page helps riders in some way to understand more what they may be feeling and to identify signs at different stages of this condition → → →***



These pictures/x-rays show Kissing Spines at various stages - spinal processes touching and diseased where there should be gaps between the bones allowing movement with no pain or restriction.