

FIRST AID

first aid box contents.

Curved or flat 5 or 6 inch scissors.

Saline flushes (use human eye washes 0.9% Saline NaCl)

Non stick 'Melonin' type dressings size – 10 x 10 cm or 10 x 20 cm (4-6 in total)

Hydrogels e.g. Intrasite, vetalintex x 2-3

Bandages e.g. Vetrap, Easifix cohesive x 6

'Elastoplast' type bandages

Wound cleanser/ antiseptic scrub e.g. Povidone Iodine or Chlorhexidine (Hibiscrub)

Cotton wool and Gamgee.

Poultice e.g. Animalintex

There are many companies that provide dressings each with a slightly different properties. Find the ones that suit you, both by price and practicality of use.

WOUNDS

Ask yourself – Is my horse vaccinated against TETANUS and is it up to date?

Wounds can be minor and almost insignificant or very impressive with large areas of skin loss. Size isn't everything and small wounds or penetrations can enter a joint or tendon sheath with very serious or catastrophic results. So if the wound is close to a joint or tendon sheath and **especially if the horse is very lame** despite only a small wound get your vet to examine the horse promptly.

BLEEDING

To start with horse owners worry about bleeding. Remember we give 1 pint of blood despite some of us only weighing 60kg. Horses have more blood per kg of body weight so a TB could easily give us 6 pints without noticing!

If you can count the drops of blood it is not much to worry about. If the blood comes as a stream then **pressure** is the first line of treatment. Call your vet. Then use some gamgee or similar and bandage it over the wound. Place another piece of gamgee over the first and place the second bandage more firmly and if necessary repeat this, increasing the bandage pressure with each successive layer.

If bleeding is not too severe it is best to cleanse the wound with clean water.

Disinfectants or antiseptics are best avoided unless they are needed to help loosen the mud. If your vet decides the wound is best stitched then it is better that you have not contaminated the wound with purple spray or wound powders. Hydrogels can be used as they are water soluble and beneficial to wound healing. Next use a non stick 'melonin' type of dressing and a light bandage to prevent further wound contamination.

Wounds to the sole of the hoof should be cleaned thoroughly and covered to prevent further contamination. Poulticing may be appropriate.

EYES

If the horse has its eyelids closed it is a sign of pain and you will need veterinary attention. If the eyelids are open and not blinking excessively; you can see the surface of the eye (Cornea) and it looks clear and the pupils are of the same diameter and respond to a bright light by contracting then it is likely that the problem is a mild irritation i.e. conjunctivitis. Use human eye rinses which are 0.9% NaCl (Sodium Chloride) to rinse the eye. Warmed to body temperature they are very safe and well tolerated by most horses. Human Optrex and cold tea have been used historically but the saline wash is much better. If in doubt call your Vet.



This eye required prolonged treatment (6weeks+) and so an external delivery device was surgically implanted under sedation.

COLIC

Most cases of colic are medical in that they resolve with just medical treatments and do not require surgery. Success is improved with prompt treatment. If the pain is severe with sweating , rolling or repeated attempts to stand and lie down then get your Vet to attend immediately. If the pain is less and you are sure that it is recent, then allow 30 – 60 minutes to see if the horse is improving, walk it gently to stop it rolling and if the horse is passing faeces and wants to eat a little hay then allow it to do so. **Your Vet will assess each case and decide on the evidence whether surgery is needed and advise you accordingly.** A repeat examination 2-3 hours later is sometimes needed to assess how the case is progressing. Excessive walking tires the patient and can cause poorer results if surgery is needed.

CHOKER

This can be very distressing for both the horse and owner. Choke occurs when feed material or a foreign body is trapped in the food pipe (oesophagus) and cannot be swallowed. It could be a single grass nut that has lodged sideways or a mass of sugar beet or maize gluten that has been gorged whilst dry and has now swollen to form a blockage. Remove all feed and water and call your vet. Many cases resolve spontaneously but in rare cases some can need a general anaesthetic. Ingestion of foreign bodies is rare but can occur. E. g. twigs and thorns/brambles. Remove all feed and call your vet.

AZOTURIA

This is a painful muscle condition of working horses allied to a severe case of cramp. Muscle can be so severely damaged that the horse will not move and the muscle cells disintegrate allowing Myoglobin into the blood circulation that can damage the kidney and causes the urine to look like port wine.

It tends to occur when the horse is still fed at a high level but only doing light work due to weather conditions or a coincidental factor e.g. loss of a shoe. If horses are not working only give them hay and water. N.B. some very good haylage may be so rich in carbohydrates that it can be a causal factor.

Stop working the horse and return it to a stable as soon as you can. It is better to box / trailer the horse back to the nearest stable rather than force it to walk. Further exercise only makes matters worse.

LAMINITIS

Causes – Most Laminitic cases are due to the horse or pony getting too much food or the wrong type of food relative to the level of work undertaken. Native ponies and cobs are very efficient at utilising low energy forage and fertilised cattle pasture is too rich producing a heavy crop of sugar rich grass.

Treatment.

The primary aim is to give pain relief, stabilise the hoof structures and prevent further damage. Call your Vet as Laminitis is painful and deserves prompt treatment.

Removal of the initiating cause is the second aim, followed by rest. **When the supporting structures of the hoof are compromised it is lunacy to allow or make the horse walk!**

Rest in a stable with a deep dry bed of 18 inches of shavings allows the laminae time to stabilise. Box rest of 4 weeks minimum is advised and severe cases need much longer.

The Laminitis Clinic website has a huge amount of extra information.

<http://www.laminitisclinic.org/Fitting%20frog%20supports.html>

Jon Herrod-Taylor B.Vet.Med. MRCVS