

Fact Sheet

Equine Wound Management

Wounds in horses are extremely common and every horse owner should be aware of how to deal with them. Whilst many wounds require simple first aid, some will require veterinary attention and treatment.

Types of wound

- **Abrasions** - these are generally minor wounds that require cleaning and can be treated topically
- **Punctures** - these can look small on the surface, but there could be significant damage underneath the skin surface
- **Full thickness skin wounds** - a wound that goes all the way through the skin which is likely to need antibiotics to treat
- **Lacerations** - wounds that appear to have jagged edges. They may cause infection and underlying soft tissue damage



Call your vet if the wound is:

- over a joint or tendon sheath (it may have penetrated the tendon sheath)
- leaking a yellow tinged fluid
- bleeding so much you must apply pressure to control the bleeding (place a thick dressing over the wound to stem the flow, while the vet is contacted)

- not healing

or

- if the wound has penetrated the sole of the hoof
- if your horse is lame - wounds that make the horse severely lame are potentially very serious

What to do whilst you wait for the vet

- Reduce contamination by hosing the area
- **Control bleeding** by applying a bandage or direct pressure
- **Prevent movement**
- **If an object is in the hoof, do not remove it**
- **Do not use purple spray or wound powder**

If the horse is distressed or in pain, call your vet. Do not take risks trying to examine the horse yourself.



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What will the vet do?

When the vet arrives, they may clip the hair from around the wound. This will help them to assess the wound. They may also give your horse sedation in order to assess the injury in a safe manner.

The vet may also need to perform the following procedures:

- Local anaesthesia
- Bandaging
- Debridement
- Medication
- Wound closure
- Surgery
- Radiography
- Hospitalisation
- Ultrasonography

How to prevent wounds

Check your paddocks, fencing and stable for any protruding objects

Use travel boots on your horse whilst travelling

Use exercise boots/bandages whilst exercising your horse



Is your horse vaccinated against tetanus?



Any wound has the potential to become infected with tetanus. Therefore it is important to keep up to date with regular vaccinations.

If your horse has not been vaccinated or their vaccination programme has lapsed and it sustains a wound, it is essential that a tetanus anti-toxin injection is given as soon as possible to prevent tetanus infection. This is not the same as a vaccination but will protect your horse against tetanus for approximately 3 weeks.

All horses and donkeys should be vaccinated against tetanus. Tetanus is frequently a fatal condition in the horse. Tetanus is caused by production of toxins by the bacteria, *Clostridium tetani*. Deep puncture wounds are particularly dangerous as they provide an ideal site for infection as the bacteria thrive in anaerobic (low oxygen) environments.

It is a very dangerous policy to leave your horse unvaccinated as many tetanus cases occur without any known wound.

If you are unsure how to treat your horse's wound, please contact your vet for advice as they will be able to advise whether a veterinary visit and examination is required.

For further information, please contact your local VetPartners Equine Veterinary Practice on:

vetPartners

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Together with our practices, our focus is on providing an excellent service to our equine clients. No two practices are the same, and we understand and embrace that independent spirit.