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# FACTSHEETS

## Basic First Aid for Horses

What do you do when you find your horse with an injury? Follow our top tips to ensure effective healing. First, ask yourself the following:

- **Does this need treated by a vet?** If any of the following apply then the answer is 'yes' and you should contact your vet straight away: non-weight bearing lameness, a cut through the entire width of the skin layer, profuse bleeding, wounds with a penetrating object or over the area of a joint, lower limb swelling, and any injury involving the eye.



If you answer no to all of the above then follow these steps to treat minor wounds:

1. **Flush the wound with copious amounts of water** - cold, low pressure hose water is ok initially to quickly remove any contamination and reduce inflammation. Ideally boil water and add a little salt to make your own sterile saline solution and lavage using a syringe (make sure the water has cooled first!).
2. **Clean the wound with antiseptic solution/wipes** - Hibiscrub® (Chlorhexidine) or Povidone antiseptic solution can both be used gently at a 1:50 dilution (it can delay healing if too concentrated). Dry around the wound gently using sterile swabs – avoid cotton wool as it can shed into the wound.
3. **Apply gel/cream/spray for protection** - minor wounds which don't require bandaging can be left open and treated with a suitable wound cream (or similar) to create a barrier and promote healing (see below for our favourites!).
4. **Bandage the limb** - more serious wounds may require bandaging (if suitable to do so dependent on location on the limb) as follows:
  - Primary layer: A non-stick layer to be applied directly to the wound; Melolin® and Allevyn are most commonly used. Soffban® is placed on top to hold the dressing in place.
  - Secondary layer: This ensures even pressure on the limb and would typically involve cotton wool or gamgee.



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- Tertiary layer: A final, elasticated layer to add compression and hold everything in place
  - Vetrap® is ideal for this or occasionally an elasticated adhesive bandage might be preferable to offer added security.

- For tricky areas (e.g. hock, stifle, body), a primary layer can be applied and secured by Polster Plast® (a self-adhesive, porous foam bandage).

- 5. Re-assess daily** - monitor the wound frequently for signs of swelling or infection. If the wound is not healing or a discharge develops then call your vet for assistance, as prescription medication may be required.



## Frequently Asked Questions:

- *What should I put on the wound?* In general, creams and gels tend to lend a better environment for healthy tissue growth over powders and sprays as a moist environment is shown to speed up new skin formation and give a better cosmetic outcome; however, silver spray creates a film against contamination.
- *Can I ride/turn him out?* This depends on the location and severity of the wound. Movement can disturb the wound and delay healing but if you have access to a small, dry paddock and your horse does not run around, turning out may be an option but it is best to clear this with your vet first. Exercise, if approved by your vet, should be kept light.
- *How long must my horse stay bandaged?* Bandaging helps prevent delayed healing and proud flesh formation. 10 - 14 days is ideal if the wound is full skin thickness, with bandage changes every 3 - 5 days.

## Suggested First Aid Kit Contents:

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| - Poultice (such as Formtex® or Animalintex®) | - Soffban®  | - Sterile Saline (1 tsp salt into 1 pint of boiling water - cooled before use) | - Silver spray   |
| - Vetwrap®                                    | - Cotton Wool roll (ideally 'vet quality')          | - Swabs  | - Intravite gel® and Flamazine® (NB Flamazine® is prescription only) |
| - Elastic adhesive bandage                    | - Hibiscrub® or Chlorhexidine wipes for ease of use | - Disposable Gloves  | - Vet phone number for emergencies!                                  |
| - Melolin®                                    |   |  |  |