Wound Care Guide
Proper Wound Care For Horses

Corona cares about the health and well being of your animals and we want you to be prepared in the inevitable event your horse ends up with an injury. In this guide you will learn how to manage minor wounds both above and on the Distal Limb (area below the knee or hock) of the horse, manage a major wound until the vet arrives, and steps you can take to help prevent wounds in your barn.

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Management of Minor Equine Wounds

Many horse owners would agree that for all their horse’s grace, beauty, and athleticism, these beloved animals are also clumsy, thin skinned and accident prone. As easily as they sidepass across an arena, tear around a barrel, jump a four foot fence, or bring an unruly calf back to the herd, they also manage to bang into stationary objects, get into friendly and not so friendly fights, or manage to catch an eyelid on a snag proof bucket hook. Their curiosity, playfulness, energy and flight instinct often gets them into trouble. It is frequently up to us, their loving owners, to put these messes back together. Basic wound management is a vital and every day skill every horse owner should be comfortable with. While some of our equines are less accident prone than others, all will inevitably end up with at least occasional minor wounds.

When you come across your recently injured horse, the first step is to evaluate the type of wound you are dealing with. Some wounds simply must be seen by a veterinarian. For example, some emergency wound situations would include, large area wounds which are sometimes difficult to heal, any eye injury, any laceration which has left a skin flap, deep or contaminated wounds, significant distal limb wounds (below the carpus or “knee” on the front limb, or the tarsus or “hock” on the back limb), or any wound where bleeding is excessive and hard to control. In addition, any wound near or involving a joint should be treated by a veterinarian. Joint infection, also called sepsis, can be a life threatening condition in a horse. With any significant wound your veterinarian will want to administer a tetanus vaccine. With this in mind we will discuss how to treat minor injuries as well as how to manage the larger ones until your veterinarian can be reached.
Treating Minor Cuts, Scrapes, and Abrasions Above the Distal Limb

Often horses end up with minor injuries above their distal limbs by scraping against something such as a sharp edge on a stall door, or during playful fight out in the pasture with their buddies. These kinds of injuries can be relatively easily managed.

First, gently clean the region surrounding the wound using gauze and a mild surgical scrub ( providine, betadine or iodine scrub works great). Once the piece of gauze you are using begins to appear dirty or bloody discard it and continue to clean the area with a new, clean gauze moistened with water and the scrub. Work in a circular motion starting at the center of the injury and working your way out so as to not contaminate the wound with debris from the surrounding skin and hair. After the area is adequately cleaned, use a clean towel to gently dry the hair surrounding the wound.

Place an ointment, such as Corona, onto the wound and surrounding area to keep the healing skin soft and supple. As it heals (typically from the outside edges towards the center of the injury) the new skin is tight, thin, and often itchy. The ointment helps to keep the new skin soft and supple as it contracts and closes. This greatly improves the comfort of the horse during the healing process, speeds healing time, as well as reducing the chance of scaring or white hair regrowth.

Finally treat the entire surrounding region with a fly repellant. The Corona ointment will protect the wound from flying pests and a spray or paste fly repellant can be used on the surrounding areas. It is important to keep irritating insects from pestering the wound as it heals. Flies and other pests delay the healing process and
can contaminate the wound. Keep a close eye on the injury, checking it daily or more often if possible. Feeding times are a great chance to give your horse a once over to check healing injuries as well as assess any new problems. Apply more ointment and fly repellent often and the wound should heal within a few days to a week depending on the depth of the initial injury.

**Treating Minor Cuts, Scrapes and Abrasions on the Distal Limb**

It seems that most commonly injured area of the horse is the lower leg. Unfortunately, this is also where minor problems can become more complicated if not treated correctly.

Distal limb considerations: Horses are notorious for producing exuberant granulation tissue, also known as proud flesh, as a response to a lower leg injury. However, when treated correctly, the chances of this uneven, raw tissue developing can be significantly reduced.

Initially the primary goal is to remove any large debris, contaminants and blood from the area. Use a hose or bucket of clean water to gently rinse the wound and the surrounding area. Next, clean the injured region more thoroughly using a mild scrub such as providine, betadine or iodine scrub. Use the same procedure as you would for a minor injury above the distal limb. Again, simply moisten clean gauze squares with water and a squirt of the scrub solution. Gently cleanse the wound area and scrub the region surrounding the wound using the gauze. Work in a circular motion starting at the center of the injury and working your way out so as to not contaminate the wound with debris from the surrounding skin and hair. Once the piece of gauze you are using begins to appear dirty or bloody discard it and continue to clean the area with new clean gauze moistened with water and scrub. After the area is adequately cleaned, use a clean, dry towel to gently dry the hair surrounding the wound. Make sure the region is completely dry before wrapping the injured leg.

Next wrap the injured area to keep debris from entering the cleaned wound and to minimize the chance of proud flesh formation. I like to first place an ointment such as Corona onto the wound to keep the healing skin soft.
and supple while it undergoes the normal healing phases. Just like a wound above the distal limbs, as it heals from the outside edges towards the center, and the new skin is tight, thin, and often itchy. Again, the corona ointment will keep the new skin soft and supple as it contracts and heals. This greatly improves the comfort of the horse during the healing process. Over the ointment place clean nonstick 4X4 gauze bandage. Next, wrap rolled gauze around the limb starting at the top and wrapping down in a spiraling “candy cane” fashion. Follow by wrapping rolled cotton or a quilted wrap around the limb. Finally, use a cohesive “stick to itself” bandage over the cotton or quilt wrap to secure and snug the wrap into place. If the wrap is likely to slip down the limb a bandage tape can be used to secure the top and bottom edge of the wrap. The wrap should be checked daily or more often for drainage or swelling above or below the wrap.

Change the wrap often (daily if possibly) to check the progress of the wound and to apply more corona ointment and fresh wraps. Once the wound has a fresh layer of healthy new skin or a strong, intact scab, the wound area can be left unwrapped. Apply the corona ointment to the area to assist in a comfortable healing process while the healing wound is open to air. Contact your veterinarian immediately if the condition worsens or seems to persist.

**Note:** Any kind of bandage placed around a horse’s distal limb must be properly placed. Special precautions need to be observed when using a cohesive wrap as they tend to constrict and tighten over time. The best way to avoid this is to simply unwrap the entire roll and then rewrap it loosely. This extra step can make the difference between a safe and effective bandage versus one which could cause more harm than good as it constricts. The wrap should always be placed starting from the front of the limb, around the outside, towards the back and then around the inside and then back to the front. See the pictures showing this process. This
correct bandage placement pulls the tendons in towards the center line of the horse. Improper wrapping can result in bowed or injured tendons.

Emergency Care for Significant Cuts, Scrapes, and Abrasions

Let’s look at the worst case scenario. You bring your horse in from his daily romp in the field and notice a large bleeding laceration. You will need to control the situation until your veterinarian can be contacted. If the wound is still bleeding significantly and does not stop with a few minutes of gentle pressure, a carefully placed compression bandage should be placed over the wound until the veterinarian arrives or the horse can be transported to the clinic.

For a wound on the distal limb follow a similar procedure as is described above to wrap the limb. Again, first place a 4X4 nonstick gauze pad over the laceration (more than one can be used if the wound is larger). Next, gently roll rolled gauze around the injured limb over the nonstick gauze pad. Follow this with sheet cotton or a quilted standing wrap around the injured limb. This layer will act as very thick padding. Finally, a cohesive “stick to itself” bandage or a cloth track bandage can be snugly wrapped around the cotton forming a compressing layer. Since this is a short term bandage you can wrap this final layer pretty snugly. This will help to control bleeding until the vet arrives.

Remember: Any kind of bandage placed around a horse’s distal limb must be properly placed. The wrap should always be placed from the front of the limb, around the outside, towards the back and then around the inside back to the front. See the pictures showing this process. This correct bandage placement pulls the tendons in towards the center line of the horse. Improper wrapping can result in bowed or injured tendons.
Wound Prevention Best Practices

The best way to keep your horse healthy is to follow routine wound prevention measures. Regularly following the steps below can greatly reduce the chances of your horse inuring itself in the first place.

- Check stalls for any protruding nails, sharp metal, loose boards, or exposed light bulbs
- Use safe bucket hooks
- Walk pastures often to check for debris and other hazards
- Check fencing often for lose boards or nails
- Keep horses to an appropriate number for the size of the turnout
- Arrange horses in groups which get along
- Turn horses out as often as possible in safe pastures to relieve excess energy
- Provide hay or grass in turnout areas and stalls to provide activity and prevent boredom

By following these simple precautionary measures you can help your horse avoid injuries and stay healthy. But, if the need arises you are prepared to care for those occasional minor injuries without undue stress for yourself or your horse. Keep an equine first aid kit handy at the barn and in the trailer for on the road injuries. You can create your own first aid kit by purchasing the supplies listed on the next page or buy one of the many pre-assembled kits offered from many retailers. Over time you will acquire additional supplies which you prefer to use or have found helpful.
Equine First Aid Kit Checklist

✓ Corona Ointment
✓ Flexible Cohesive “stick to itself” Wrap (such as vet wrap or pet flex)
✓ Bottle of iodine, providine, or betadine scrub solution
✓ Package 3-ply Towels
✓ Pair Bandage Scissors
✓ Pair Vinyl Gloves
✓ Package 4” x 4” Gauze Pads
✓ Package 4” x 4” nonstick Gauze Pads
✓ Package Alcohol Prep Pads
✓ Thermometer

Other Fine Health Care Products Available from Corona:

• Corona Udder Butter
• Corona Hoof Dressing
• Corona Concentrated Shampoo
• Corona Detangler & Shine
• Corona Fung-A-Way
• Corona Liniment