



First Aid Kit

How often do you find your horse has had an injury of some sort? Whether it be due to minor kicks, bruising, abrasions, wounds, or abscesses, horses just seem to be able to find a way to injure themselves. If you own a horse, it is essential to have a well-stocked first aid kit in the stable and in your truck or float!

**Please note, this article is not about eliminating the veterinarian from your lives; it is about being prepared to deal with minor situations or emergencies while waiting for help to arrive.

Here is a list of items that you can put together in a kit to be used when first aid treatment is required by the equine in your life:

Emergency numbers: Keep a list of contact numbers that you can call when you have an emergency. You should have after hours and daytime numbers for your veterinarian, the farrier, and a neighbour or friend who lives close by, who can help in an equine emergency, if required.

First Aid Manual: Find a good equine first aid manual to use as a reference when situations arise.

Torch (Flashlight): This is useful if you need to venture out in the night for an emergency.

Twitch: A twitch is a useful tool that helps to sedate and reduce pain in your horse while it is being treated.

Knife: A sharp knife is useful to cut rope etc.

Wire cutters: There is nothing worse than finding your horse stuck in a fence with no way to cut them out. ICK!!!

Clean Towel: Hold a clean towel over a wound and apply pressure to help slow or stop any bleeding.

Bandages: Clean stable bandages and padding are a useful to stem bleeding or to use as a support bandage for the leg opposite the injured one, or even better, for all of the other uninjured legs.

Round-Ended Scissors: A pair of sharp scissors is a must for the first aid kit as they can be used for trimming hair from around a wound, cutting fresh bandage material, or for cutting old bandages off. Round ends keep you from inflicting any further injuries if you slip or if the horse moves when you are trying to cut away the bandage.

Tweezers: These are handy for removing dirt and debris from wounds.

Saline Solution: A saline solution is very useful for flushing and cleaning wounds of debris, as it is gentle on the skin and tissue. You can make your own saline solution mixing one teaspoon of plain table salt to 600ml of cooled, boiled water. While we are on the subject, don't wash wounds on horses with hydrogen peroxide. The horse's cells do not like peroxide. Also, keep some commercially-prepared, individual use saline solution (which can be purchased from the pharmacy) in your kit as these are useful for cleaning the eye.

Antiseptic Wash or Scrub: Betadine or chlorhexidine solutions should be diluted to wash the wound itself. Surgical scrubs of either type can be used straight to clean the wound. Be sure to pick debris out before you start scrubbing or hosing so you don't push foreign matter deeper into the wound.

Gauze: Non-stick, sterile gauze can be placed over the wound site after it has been cleaned and treated prior to bandaging. This aids in keeping the site clean and stops the cotton wool or gamgee from sticking to the wound.

Topical Antibacterial Ointment or Cream: In the first week or so, before granulation tissue (pink, bubbly-looking tissue) fills the wound, an anti-bacterial cream can prevent infection and promote healing. (Once granulation tissue is

present, bacterial infection is generally no longer an issue, so you can stop with the cream and turn your attention instead to preventing proud flesh.)

Vaseline: This is useful to apply below a wound site, to prevent scalding from any discharge from the wound.

Cotton wool padding: Gamgee or Combi-Roll is ideal for using over top of the gauze, which will be placed directly over the wound site, to give plenty of padding and protection so a leg can be wrapped.

Poultice Bandages: These medicated pads are used on the foot or wounds to help draw impurities and abscesses out. They also keep the area clean.

Vet wrap: This self-stick bandaging is essential for holding padding in place when bandaging wounds etc.

Elastoplast: Elastoplast is used to keep bandaging in place and it can be stuck to the hair. Don't stretch it, but put it on loose. That way, as the horse moves, the stretch will allow it to stretch and stay stuck.

Duct Tape: Duct tape is especially useful as a hoof wrap over poultice bandaging as it is waterproof and durable. Don't stick it to the skin above the cornet band; just stick it to the hoof.

Hoof Testers: These can be sourced from your local saddlery or veterinary supply. They are used to test different areas of the hoof for pain which could indicate a stone bruise, abscess or even a pedal bone fracture.

Hoof Nippers (or nail cutters) and Rasp: These are farriery tools which are used to remove a sprung or loose shoe. It is important to remove the shoe so the horse does not stand on a nail which could pierce the sole and cause serious complications. These can be purchased from equine supply stores, or ask your farrier if he has a second hand one he might be prepared to sell you.

Hoof Pick: These are essential for removing dirt, stones, and other debris from the hoof.

Medicated Shampoo Wash: Keep on hand to wash the horse if it has a skin condition.

Disinfectant: (Virkon S) is a must have disinfectant that can help stop the spread of infection. Use it to disinfect, buckets, feeders, tie-up areas etc. Use this on the environment, not on the horse's wounds. (You can use a diluted version of this to sterilize ring worm lesions to reduce the likelihood of transmission to people and other animals, though it won't do anything to actually cure the ringworm in the horse that has it.)

Epsom salts: Soak a foot in a concentrated solution of Epsom salts and warm water (add until the Epsom salts don't all dissolve) to draw out any impurities from an abscess or quarter cracks.

Ice Pack or Instant Ice Pack: Use an ice pack on any fresh injury to limit the amount of inflammation and swelling that will occur. Sometimes you can wrap a bandage around an icepack to help hold it in place. If you have no ice, cold water can be used instead.

Molasses: This can be added to a horse's feed or drinking water if a horse has lost their appetite or thirst. It can be useful when you need to cover up the taste of medicated powders or help to stick them to the feed.

Stethoscope: These can be purchased through your veterinarian or a medical supply store. This is crucial for taking heart rates and listening to gut sounds.

Digital Thermometer: Digital thermometers can be purchased from your pharmacy. They are easy to use and are less likely to break than the glass/mercury brands. You can use KY jelly or just spit on the end to lubricate it before taking your horse's temperature.

Tip – Use cold water to wash any bandages, padding or clothing, which has fresh blood on it. Cold water won't set the blood and stain the material.

For further information on how to tell if your horse is healthy or not, click here ... <https://www.pro-dosa.com/determining-healthy-horse-normal/>

We hope this helps!