



## Wound Assessment and First Aid

### 1. Wound Assessment

If you discover that your horse has sustained an injury it is important to assess the damage as objectively as possible before implementing treatment in order to ensure that the right course of action is taken from the start.

If the answer to any of the following questions is yes then please call the Town and Country Veterinary Practice for advice immediately on 01858 465668

- Is the horse very lame?
- Is the wound over a joint, flexor tendon or eye?
- Is the wound large or could it be deep (for example a puncture wound)?
- Is there profuse bleeding?

If there is profuse bleeding from a wound it can be very distressing. It is however very important to remain calm. It may be of some comfort to know that an average sized horse will have about 50 litres (88 pints) of blood, it is highly unlikely that a horse will lose enough blood through an external wound to suffer from the effects of blood loss.

If it is more than 2 years since your horse had a tetanus vaccination we would advise that you contact the practice during opening hours and arrange for a tetanus booster.

## 2. Wound Management

If you are happy that the answer to all the questions overleaf is NO then the following basic steps are essential to ensuring rapid and uneventful healing.

1. Clip the hair around the wound so that you can see the full extent of the injury and to make it easier to clean and keep clean. Before clipping around the wound it is advisable to pack the wound with a sterile water-soluble gel such as dermagel, intrasite or k-y jelly to prevent hair and debris from contaminating the wound.
2. Flush the wound to clear out any dirt or contaminants. The best thing to use is a large volume of sterile saline. If you are going to use disinfectants it is important not to use anything irritant that will damage the exposed tissues. If you use hibiscrub it must be diluted to 1:50 concentration. The flushing can be performed using a 50ml syringe with a 16 gauge needle or using a ready made flush such as iriclens.
3. Assess the wound for depth and extent.
  - a. If there is any suspicion that the wound is deep and may involve important structures such as a joint it is important to seek veterinary advice immediately. Some puncture wounds may look small on the outside but have introduced infection deep into the tissues below and thus be far more serious than they initially seem.
  - b. If there are any loose flaps of tissue it is sometimes necessary to remove these to allow the wound to heal properly. If you are in any doubt as to whether this is indicated then call 01858 465668 and speak to the duty veterinarian.
  - c. If the wound is recent and has clean edges then it may be possible to close by suturing the wound. Prompt veterinary assessment is required in this case as a wound closed within the first 4 hours has the best chance of healing. There may be circumstances when the vet will advise delayed closure if the wound requires decontamination and debridement first.
4. Once the wound has been cleaned, it must be kept clean. To promote optimal healing the wound surface should be kept moist but not wet. A light but sterile and non stick dressing such as Melonin or Skintact should be sufficient for a small wound. If the wound is slightly larger and oozing then it may be necessary to use a more absorbent dressing such as Allevyn. Avoid using wound powders or irritant antiseptic creams.
5. Wounds to the limbs will often result in some degree of swelling, usually tending to the lower regions. It is advisable to put stable bandages on your horse to help minimise this.