



Field Notes

Advice and Information



December 2018

Wound Wisdom

Simple steps to help you tackle wounds with confidence

Skin is incredible stuff. It keeps insides inside and harmful bacteria outside. A wound has potential to compromise both these life-preserving functions. And as many of us know only too well, horses are very good at wounding themselves!

A wounded body is always working to:

- ⓪ stop bleeding
- ⓪ prevent infection
- ⓪ promote healing

Sometimes our help is unnecessary, sometimes it is beneficial and sometimes it is absolutely crucial.

Let this edition of Redwings *Field Notes* guide you through the world of wounds and the the dos and don'ts of wound first aid!

Contents:

Practical first aid:

Top tips to help you do the best for a wounded horse

Know your wounds:

Why small wounds can be dangerous too

Reduce the risks:

Prevention is better than cure... and cheaper too!

Case study:

How good decisions helped a Redwings pony



Matty was rescued with untreated open wounds

Get ahead

Don't wait for a wound to happen!

Know your wounds...



Laceration

Skin is sliced or torn. Stitches or staples are often required to reconnect the damaged skin and protect the tissues beneath.



Puncture

Skin is pierced by an object. Punctures can be deceptively small but are potentially life-threatening depending on how deep the object has penetrated and which internal structures have been affected.



Abrasion

The top layer of skin and hair are removed but the underlying skin structure is still in place. Blood and fluid can still ooze and may attract flies in summer so cleaning, monitoring and deterring insects will encourage straightforward healing.



Avulsion

Skin is completely torn off, exposing the underlying structures. A major injury but repair can be possible with intensive veterinary support. This pony made a complete recovery.



Burst abscess

The one wound that is welcome! Abscesses are the result of internal infection and they need to burst for the pus to exit the body. The hole must be allowed to drain freely, though should be kept clean to ensure it doesn't let infection in as well as out.

Redwings says...

Practice bandaging, poulticing and taking your horse's temperature so you and your horse are both used to them!

Be Prepared

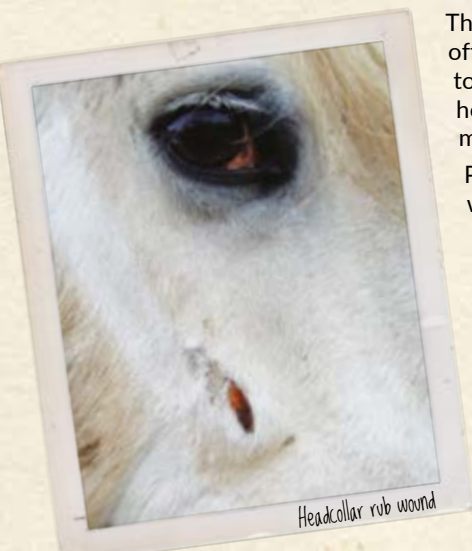
First aid kit for wounds

- Disposable gloves
- Cotton wool
- A range of bandaging materials
- Thermometer
- Blunt-ended scissors
- Headlight or torch

Reduce the risks

- Provide a safe, secure living environment
- Check regularly and thoroughly for hazards
- Monitor and manage group dynamics
- Introduce new companions with care
- Treat conditions that cause itchiness, such as sweet itch and leg mites
- Ensure that anything a horse wears, from rugs and tack to headcollars and bandages, are a perfect fit and in good condition. Most of us think of wounds as being inflicted by an accident. But nasty wounds can also be caused by persistent trauma from ill-fitting horse wear.

in any of these areas may affect whether or not a horse could be ridden, or even wear everyday items such as a headcollar or rug. Put time and effort into fitting items properly (don't be tempted to compromise fit for cost or convenience). Remember that any change in body shape can affect fit and check frequently and carefully for signs of rubbing, swelling or discomfort. Bear in mind that a horse's 'grumpy' behaviour when a rug is put on or their girth is done up may be triggered by pain.



Headcollar rub wound

The location of these wounds often makes them difficult to treat and can impact on how the horse is worked or managed.

Parts of the body that want or need to be mobile often experience slow or compromised healing.

As well as joints, this includes skin stretched by movement (such as in the girth area or around eyes and ears), the withers and the mouth. A wound



Don't take a gamble on tetanus!

Tetanus bacteria love wounds.

They are an access all areas entry point into your horse's body from the environment.

Tetanus attacks the nervous system and is fatal in more than 75% of cases.

You can't guarantee your horse won't get an injury.

You can guarantee they won't get tetanus.

Vaccinate!



My horse is wounded - what should I do?!

Don't panic. Stay safe. Get help. If in doubt, contact your vet.



Keep the horse relaxed

Keep calm so the horse doesn't pick up on your anxiety. Offer food as a distraction, and remember that a relaxed horse has lower blood pressure which helps reduce bleeding.

Your vet can sedate your horse if needed - **don't put yourself at risk** if your horse is distressed.



Assess the injury

Use the 'What do vets need to know' guidance overleaf to help you assess the various important aspects of a wound. Remember that even a small wound can be very serious, depending on its location.



Check the whole horse

Look for further injuries you may not have spotted; if your horse is lame or reluctant to walk, ask your vet for advice before you move them.

Take a rectal temperature, pulse and respiration (if safe to do so) - readings above normal may indicate pain or infection.

Keep an eye on your horse's behaviour - dullness may be a symptom of concern.



Contact your vet if needed

Contact your vet about any wound that has reached tissues underneath the skin or that is near a joint, bone, tendon or the eye. Talk to your vet while you are with your horse so you can describe what you see.

Speak to your vet if you are unsure of what immediate first aid your horse needs.



Keep embedded objects in place

Don't remove an embedded object - your vet needs to examine it in place. If you feel the object must be removed at once, talk to your vet first, and remember that removing an object might trigger a bleed.



Reduce blood loss

Use clean absorbent material to apply pressure to a wound to help stem bleeding.



Clean with care

Clean a superficial wound with warm water.

Be aware that disturbing a fresh clot may trigger further bleeding.

Take care not to flush dirt or bacteria into a wound, always direct any water flow away from the area and avoid cleaning if there is embedded hair or grit.

Running tepid water over the area can help reduce swelling (cold water can increase this in open wounds).



Promote healthy healing

Do not apply creams or powders before your vet has assessed the wound.

Avoid using products unless you are really sure they will help. Few products are really beneficial and some can actually cause irritation or slow healing.

Your vet can advise / prescribe specific products for your horse's case.

Barrier or fly cream around a wound can help deter insects in summer.



Look after the whole horse

Provide food, water and bedding to keep your horse nourished and comfortable.

Monitor the horse closely for development of any new physical or psychological symptoms.

What do vets need to know?

Giving your vet as much information as possible over the phone will help them to help you. They are likely to ask you the following questions:

- ❓ What type of wound is it?
- ❓ Where is it? Be clear about how close a wound is to joints, tendons, ligaments or eyes.
- ❓ What size and how deep is it?
- ❓ Can you see any muscles, tendons or bones?
- ❓ Is the wound still bleeding? If so, how much?
- ❓ Is there any pus, discharge or other fluid?
- ❓ Do you know what caused the wound?
- ❓ Are there any foreign bodies still in place?
- ❓ How old is the wound?
- ❓ Are there any other symptoms such as lameness, sweating or change in behaviour?
- ❓ Is the horse vaccinated against tetanus?

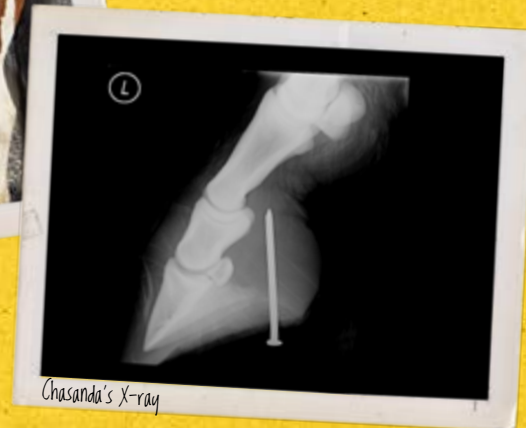
Make time for training

Horses can be treated far more safely and effectively when they stand quietly. Although pain can affect a horse's behaviour, taking the time to train good habits in your horse in advance is always an invaluable investment that will help you provide first aid or ongoing wound care.

Go to www.redwings.org.uk/what-we-do/rescue-and-care/behaviour for more



Beautiful native pony Chasanda!



Chasanda's X-ray

Meet Chasanda!

Breed: Native Pony
Height: 13hh
Born: 2000

Rescued pony Chasanda was found with non-weight bearing lameness one morning in 2012. Gently examining the affected leg, two Redwings horse checkers were shocked to find a large nail protruding from her frog. We had no idea how the rogue nail found its way into the paddock, and the paddock was immediately checked thoroughly to ensure there were no others.

Sanctuary staff know not to interfere with an embedded object. Our checkers stayed with Chasanda and rang the vet, then requested first aid items from colleagues to support the hoof and prevent the nail being pushed further into the foot.

Keeping the nail in place allowed a Redwings vet to take an X-ray on the field to see exactly where the nail had gone. The nail could then be removed and Chasanda safely moved for treatment.

Fortunately, the X-ray showed that the nail had not come into contact with any of the bones in the foot. However there was concern over possible damage to the deep digital flexor tendon and the pastern joint. Chasanda underwent surgery to examine the tendon and joint (both thankfully uninjured), flush the wound hole and administer antibiotics directly into the foot.

Following routine cleaning and bandaging of the foot to prevent bacteria entering the wound site along with a course of antibiotics and pain relief, Chasanda was completely sound in just two weeks and soon back out in the paddock. Today she is enjoying life as a companion in a family home through Redwings' rehoming scheme.

PS. Knowing that all Redwings residents have their vaccinations kept up to date meant that there was one less thing for our vets to think about when treating Chasanda!



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