



Mud Fever

‘Pastern dermatitis’

Underlying Causes

Pastern dermatitis has multiple underlying causes:

- Bacterial infection
- Vasculitis
- Immune mediated
- Photosensitisation
- Underlying mite infestation

Whatever the underlying cause, discomfort is caused by the secondary bacterial infection.

True Mud Fever

- Requires damage to the skin to allow bacteria to enter
- Bacterial infection causes heat, pain, swelling, itching, discharge
- The bacteria live under the scabs – need to remove the scabs to reach the bacteria

Initially treat in the same way!

When to manage on the yard

If the equine has:

- Mild swelling
- No lameness
- No high temperature
- Staff can safely touch the legs

Management strategies on the yard

Sedation

If the equine needs sedating to manage its legs then consider using Domosedan Gel

- Gel administered under the tongue
- Same drug as given intravenously

- Give half an hour before treatment
- Use gloves to administer
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For some horses this isn't enough – request IV sedation from a vet. Prescription required but equine does not have to be seen for this to be given.

Hibiscrub

- Hibiscrub is brilliant for killing the mud fever bacteria
- Needs a contact time of 5-10 minutes: dilute, apply and lather with warm water then leave on for 5-10 minutes before rinsing off thoroughly
- Needs to be in contact with the skin under the scabs – remove beforehand or during the wash
- Do not use more often than every other day or the skin can become more sore
- On the days where hibiscrub is not used then the legs should just be washed in warm water

Leg wraps

- Apply aqueous cream to the legs then wrap in cling film
- Stable bandage over the top of the cling film and leave in place for 20 minutes – 2 hours (max.)
- This helps to soften the scabs so you can remove them more easily, so the hibiscrub and any topical treatment gets in direct contact with the skin

Mud fever cream

- We are going to start using our own mud fever cream – a combination of e45, steroid and antibiotic to be applied topically
- Gloves MUST be worn when handling it as it contains steroids
- It should be applied liberally to legs after the scabs have been removed and the legs have been cleaned
- No prescription required – supplied as needed by internal welfare

Barrier creams - Prevention

- For horses on turn out, aqueous cream, vaseline or sudocrem can be used as a barrier cream to protect their legs
- This can be used to stop horses developing mud fever, or can be used in the treatment plan once the mud fever cream has soaked in for horses to go back out

Cold hosing

- Cold hosing can offer relief to sore or swollen legs
- It also helps remove the mud harbouring the bacteria and allows you to visualise the damaged skin and treat it more effectively
- It is important to dry the skin thoroughly after and before applying any treatment

Exercise

- Moving about is really useful to

prevent filling of the limbs or worsening of the swelling

- If the horse can't be turned out then hand walking may help to reduce swelling

When to call a vet

Too dangerous to clip legs or apply treatments

- Lameness
- Moderate to severe swelling, pitting oedema
- Pain on palpation
- High temperature

Additional management strategies

- Sedation to clip legs and remove scabs, Domosedan gel can be used for mild cases, or amenable

equines, but more difficult cases will require IV sedation.

- Removing the hair makes the area easier to visualise and treat
- Pain relief and anti-inflammatories:
- Bute and flunixin are both analgesic and anti-inflammatory
- Legs are easier to manage when they are more comfortable

Antibiotics

- In rare cases, antibiotics may also be needed to fully treat the infection
- Antibiotics should be reserved for cases where there are signs of deeper infection – marked swelling, painful limb, lameness, fever
- Most cases will resolve with

topical treatment and anti-inflammatories alone

Further lab testing

- If the infection does not respond to standard treatment then we can take a swab of the area to send for culture and sensitivity
- This tells us what bacteria are present and what is the most appropriate antibiotic to use to treat the infection
- This may become more relevant to us as we deal with horses that develop infections after exposure to the contaminated flood waters

