

Mud fever confusion

I have two cobs that both suffer from mud fever, but whereas one has dry scabs the other has lesions which become really gooey. Why is this?

Joy Brent, by email

BECKY SAYS Mud fever is a bacterial skin infection affecting the lower legs, in areas subjected to continued wetting and trauma.

Signs of mud fever are classic. Hair is matted and contains crusty scabs, which when removed have moist lesions underneath. There may also be a thick, creamy, white or yellow discharge.

The discharge on one of your cobs contains the bacteria that cause mud fever and it sounds like this horse is more affected than your other cob.

This can be due to many reasons, such as the number of bacteria involved, the size of the affected area, thickness of the skin and the horse's own immune system.



OUR EXPERT PANEL

Becky is an experienced vet who enjoys all aspects of equine medicine. She is vet advisor to Nettex. In her spare time, Becky rides her horse, Markie.



Clare is a registered equine nutritionist who is the research and development manager for Spillers Horse Feeds. Visit: www.spillers-feeds.com.



MARK TABACHNIK

Vet Mark is an equine partner at Wright & Moreton in Cheshire, a member practice of XL Equine. He has a specific interest in equine dentistry.

crusty scabs and metimes a discharge

However, treatment for both cobs should be identical, starting by removing the scabs.

This can be done using dilute chlorhexidine in warm water, or a product that's designed to soften firmly attached scabs, so they can be gently removed.

A mild disinfectant then needs to be applied to get rid of the bacteria. Chlorhexidine-based products are ideal for this, and then the legs

This needs to be repeated until the mud fever has completely cleared up.

White hairs have appeared on my horse's withers. Could this have been caused by my saddle?

Phoebe Dale, Shrewsbury, Shrops

MARK SAYS This is called 'leukotrichia', and is caused by a loss of the pigment melanin.

Melanin usually causes the dark colouring of hair. When it's lost, although the hair may grow as normal, it will be white.

It can have many causes. For example, it is a part of the normal aging process around

Other causes can be chemical injury, or

In your case, the likely cause is pressure under the saddle, but possible contact allergies with numnahs have been reported. The condition is generally not associated with itchiness or underlying diseases.

Leukotrichia is a cosmetic disease. There are no treatments available, but it is unlikely to cause future problems



Should I feed linseed?

My ex-racer is in light work and I feed her hay and a low-calorie horse and pony cube. Someone commented that she's looking 'ribby' and I should add linseed to her feed. Is that a good idea?

Sharon Evans, by email

CLARE SAYS If you think your mare needs extra condition there are several steps you can take. Firstly, you need to eliminate any health issues and have her teeth checked.

Once you have satisfied yourself that all is well, ensure you are feeding enough quality forage and the recommended amount of horse and

If not, increase her feed to around 3kg to 4kg per day. If you are already feeding the amount recommended on the bag, you could switch to a product that is higher in energy.

With an ex-racehorse, it is important to keep her temperament calm. I suggest choosing a feed based on slow-release energy sources, such as fibre and oil. These will either come in a chopped fibre form or as cubes, often designed for competition use.

You can add in linseed, a high oil extrusion or vegetable oil but it is important you address the base

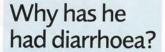
White hairs are a worry

the muzzle and eyes of older horses.

somewhat rarely, following injections.

However, consult a qualified saddle fitter to check your tack is not causing your horse any discomfort or physical issues.





If you are worried about a lump, get it checked by a vet

can still feed it to

your horse.

My veteran has suffered diarrhoea on and off since the weather got colder. Now the grass has gone he's TIP from on a diet of hay and high fibre cubes. Can you help?

Tim Ford, by email

MARK SAYS Common reasons hay, by picking up any loose bits for a horse suffering from diarrhoea after you've filled nets - as long may be poor teeth - which can as it's clean and dry you prevent a veteran from properly chewing his feed - or worms. Your horse should be on a regular worming programme and you can also have a worm egg count performed on a



Can some horses be fussy?

O've been trying to find the right diet for a new horse, but she refuses to eat certain products. I thought all horses would eat anything! Wendy Twitchen, by email

What

is this

lump?

After a day's hunting, which involved jumping some hedges, my horse has

developed a hard lump on the front of his

MARK SAYS Be careful - the only person who

should diagnose a condition in your horse is a

vet. That's what we're trained and qualified for.

Advice from well-meaning people is never a

substitute for this, no matter how well intentioned

There are many things a 'hard lump' could

anatomical structures the lump is associated with

Then we'd think about what's underneath it

and how surrounding tissues have been affected.

be. The first thing a vet would do is see which

- is it near a tendon perhaps, or a muscle?

could be a thorn - if so, how can I get it out?

Selina Taylor, Glasgow

leg, at the top. My yard manager said it

CLARE SAYS Horses are like people and have individual tastes and preferences

Most horses, and especially ponies, are not particularly discerning when it comes to food but some are fussier.

In this situation it is a case of trial and error until you find something they will eat.

There are, however, different things you can try to encourage your horse to leave a nice clean bowl. These include finely chopping apples, carrots or other root vegetables, mixing in some



Bone, for example, would produce a very

Other useful clues are if the lump is painful to

A thorn injury might expect to have an entry

hole, or a discharging tract, and painful, reactive

We would be likely to trot the horse up to see

The nature of the lump still might not be clear

After this, I'd be hopeful we would have a good

if he was lame, or whether his gait was affected.

on a single examination, in which case we could

consider ultrasound scans or x-rays to provide

I would certainly not advocate trying to

encourage a possible thorn out without firm

evidence there is one present in the first place.

hard swelling, whereas reacting scar tissue

might be a little softer.

swelling around it.

the touch or has a discharge.

a more accurate diagnosis.

idea of how to treat the problem.

molassed sugar beet or apple juice or mixing in a spice, such as fenugreek.

Fenugreek has been shown to encourage intake although it does have a strong smell.

Horses absorb a lot of water in their large intestines. If this organ is diseased, it may not absorb as much water, causing it to come out in the droppings as diarrhoea.

There are many types of inflammatory bowel disease which affect horses, and this can be investigated by your vet.

They might suggest a blood sample to look at plasma proteins, which can commonly be lost by diseased bowels.

In the meantime, a bland diet is a sensible first step, but remember to add a feed balancer to provide minerals and vitamins, which may otherwise be missing.

If veterinary investigations come back clear, you may like to seek advice from an equine nutritionist.