

Horse Answers

Leading trainers, instructors, feed experts and vets offer you free, professional advice - whatever your problem may be



Horse Answers editor
REBECCA STATHAM

● If you have a question for one of our experts, whatever the topic, send it to rebecca.statham@bauermedia.co.uk

Meet our experts



NEIL JACKSON is a registered farrier with 34 years' experience in the trade



LYLA CANSFIELD is a four-star Parelli professional in south west Wales



ELEANOR FROST is a qualified massage therapist with a BSc (Hons) in Equine Science



REBECCA STOJAK is a solicitor at Shakespears Law Firm



TRACEY HAMMOND has an MSc in equine science and is a nutritionist at Dengie



MIAPALLES-CLARK is a British Showjumping accredited coach



MICHAEL PEACE is a behaviourist who works with problem horses using his Think Equus philosophy



CLARE BARFOOT BSc (Hons) RNutr, is an equine nutrition expert at Spillers



JOHN BRENTNALL BVSc MRCVS is a partner at Severn Edge Equine Vets www.sevg.co.uk/



SARAH SHEARMAN is a horse whisperer and is the founder of Autism Angels



TERESA HOLLANDS BSc(Hons) MSc(Nutrition) PhD RNutr is an equine nutritionist

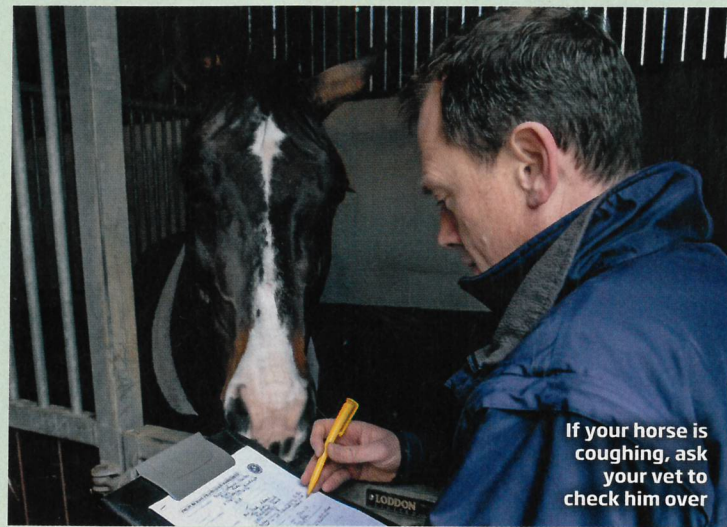


IMOGEN BURROWS is a vet at Cliffe Equine Clinic, part of the XLEquine veterinary group



MARK SANDERSON BVM&S MRCVS is a partner at Severn Edge Equine Vets www.sevg.co.uk/

VETERINARY



If your horse is coughing, ask your vet to check him over

Diagnosing a cough

Q My horse has been coughing, which is out of character. He's only stabled overnight and his bedding hasn't changed. I try to ensure his stable isn't dusty. He doesn't have any odd looking discharge from his nose or anything. What might this be?
Bryan Parker, Yorkshire

Vet Imogen Burrows says:
A The cough may just be due to a respiratory infection - possibly viral, as these can come around at

any time of year - although often other horses on the yard may also cough.

The best way to check is to get your vet to do an endoscopic examination, which involves passing a fiberoptic camera down the airway. This takes samples of the respiratory secretions to identify the problem.

Treatment can be straightforward, but it's best not to let this go on for too long without taking action.



Call a vet if you discover an unusual growth on your horse

Understanding growths

Q I've found a lump on my horse's thigh. The hair around it has changed colour and is now black. It sticks out like a thorn and looks like a small growth (see left). What is this?
Elissa Hill, Cambridgeshire

Vet John Brentnall says:
A I'd need more information to be absolutely sure, however, it may be a small tumour - either a sarcoid (although this is an unusual location) or a papilloma. It's important to remember that if it is a tumour these lesions are divided into two broad groups - benign and malignant. In this case it is most likely to be the former and just grow locally without spreading. If it was removed and sent to a laboratory then a definitive diagnosis could be made.

CARE



Behavioural changes could indicate that your horse is due a massage

Signs your horse needs some TLC

Q How do I know if my horse would benefit from a massage?
Harriett Upton, Yorkshire

Massage therapist Eleanor Frost says:
A Any changes in your horse's normal temperament or behaviour could indicate tension or soreness in his body, so it may be time for a massage. Examples of these include agitation or irritability, pulling faces, or apparent dislike when being groomed or rugged. There may also be issues when mounting, such as swinging the hindquarters away or rushing to move off, unusual laziness or rushing when ridden, stiffness from behind, difficulty bending on a particular rein, lateral stiffness, unevenness or breaking of gait. More extreme behaviours include bolting, bucking, rearing and napping.

A regular maintenance check of your horse by a qualified equine massage therapist is useful to help identify any potential issues, before it gets to the stage when your horse needs time out of work, training or competition.

Protect him from sunburn

Q How can I protect my horse's pink bits on his muzzle from getting sunburnt when he's turned out in the warmer months?
Charlie Bretton, Yorkshire

Vet Mark Sanderson says:
A The best option is to use sun cream. I recommend using factor 50 children's hypoallergenic sun cream and following the same instructions as you would on a child. However, before using any sun cream we advise applying a test spot, waiting 24 hours to make sure there's no allergic reaction, then apply cream liberally to all areas of concern.



Use factor 50 sun cream to keep sun burn at bay

The benefits of using plastic shoes

Q I do a lot of work with my horse on the roads and ride him on hard ground when competing. I'm worried about the effect that metal shoes are having on his legs, is there an alternative to using steel?
Fiona Hogarth, East Midlands

Farrier Neil Jackson says:
A There is an alternative to using steel shoes and that's to use plastic instead. I've made a plastic shoe to mimic the effect of a barefoot horse but it also has the added benefit of protecting the foot.

Tests have shown that the plastic reduces concussion up the horse's leg by up to 80% compared to when wearing steel shoes. It also allows natural flexibility and movement of the foot or heel as the plastic doesn't restrict movement like a steel, rigid shoe would.

A plastic shoe is lightweight so suits long distance riding as the horse has less to carry on his joints. In fact, it's 1/4 of the weight of a steel shoe and this will have the benefit of less wear and tear across your horse's leg muscles and tendons.

The shoe also covers a lot more of the bottom of the foot and helps support the frog, which enables it to work in the same way as it would in a natural, unshod horse. It distributes the pressure more evenly to ensure the bone column of the leg is supported. Plastic shoes have the same longevity as a steel shoe, obviously



Plastic shoes can be nailed on like steel shoes... or glued straight onto your horse's hoof

depending on your horse's workload. You should look to get his feet trimmed every six to eight weeks and the plastic shoe will need replacing on average two to three times a year. They're not just used for therapeutic reasons, they're extremely good for competition and everyday use. I generally find that once someone tries plastic shoes on their horse, they don't go back to the traditional steel version as the change in their horse's way of going is seen immediately.