

Knowing how to correctly bandage a leg wound will aid your horse's ability to heal

Give wounds some welly!

Discover how different wounds heal and what bandages you'll need to treat them with expert advice from XLEquine's Marie Rippingale



OUR EXPERT

MARIE RIPPINGALE qualified as an equine veterinary nurse in 2007 and works for Scarsdale Veterinary Group, a member of XLEquine, part of the XLVets Group.

We all know that our horses have no trouble injuring themselves - usually in the field where they've been playing with their pals, collecting the odd bump and graze. Knowing how to handle the wounds they pick up, means you'll be able to deal with every injury correctly and with confidence. To explain the different wounds you might come across and how to bandage leg wounds the right way, we've enlisted the help of XLEquine Bandaging Angel and vet nurse Marie Rippingale.

"The equine Bandaging Angels are a group of four equine nurses who've started working within XLVet practices across the UK," explains Marie. "We've been brought together by wound care expert Georgie Hollis, to offer a service to vet practices through which we hope to standardise wound care in equine practice and teach techniques that will lead to optimal wound healing for patients. We also give

Turn the page for Marie's guide to applying bandages

presentations on bandaging best practice and run sessions to teach vets and nurses our best practice bandaging techniques."

But it's not just in practices that the Bandaging Angels want to help. To improve the wound care knowledge of everyday horse owners, they've joined forces with us to create this handy guide, so read on to become a wound care know-it-all and a bandaging pro!



Know your wounds

Before attempting any wound care, it's helpful to understand how wounds heal. This happens in four stages:

- 1 Clotting** Bleeding stops and a clot forms over the wound.
- 2 Swelling** This is most active two to three days after injury. At this stage, white blood cells, called neutrophils and macrophages, begin a 'clean-up' process. Here you'll see discharge produced as a by-product.
- 3 Healing** As the wound heals, a healthy blood supply forms at the edges to provide a healthy bed for healing and the wound shrinks in size.
- 4 Scarring** This process continues for many months post injury and is where collagen is laid down to give the wound a greater, flexible strength.

There are also different types of bandage for different types of wound, so check out the handy table below to get to grips with which ones do what.

The role of bandage	The benefit to the patient
Support Helps to reduce pain in the case of fractures or tendon/ligament injuries	Helps to reduce pain and swelling and gives additional support to internal structures
Protection	Protects the wound from infection and self-mutilation while holding any dressings in place
Pressure	Helps to stop bleeding and reduce swelling
Immobilisation	Restricts the movement of joints and soft tissue injuries while reducing pain levels and providing comfort

Applying a standard lower limb bandage



1 Prepare your equipment

You'll need scissors, surgical gloves, a primary dressing layer (such as Melolin), orthopaedic padding (such as Soffban), a roll of cotton wool, a conforming mesh bandage (such as Knitfirm), self-adhesive bandage (such as Co-plus), sticky bandage (such as Flexoplast) and tape.



2 Prepare your patient

It's important that a competent handler can hold your horse and keep him still (some horses might need to be sedated). Both you and your handler should wear protective clothing - a riding hat and steel toecap boots.



6 Add a protective layer

Now it's time to wrap the cotton wool evenly around the leg. Once you've done this, you can cut or break it off after one complete layer.



7 Apply the mesh bandage

The conforming mesh bandage should be applied over the top of the cotton wool, overlapping the previous layer by 50%. A firm, even pressure is all you need. Mesh should never be applied directly to the skin as it can cause sores - leave an inch of cotton wool visible top and bottom (see inset).



3 Apply the dressing

Be sure to wear surgical gloves to help keep the site and equipment sanitary as you treat the wound. Prepare to apply the primary dressing layer and orthopaedic padding to the wound.



4 Get padding

Holding the primary dressing over the wound, begin to wrap the orthopaedic padding around the limb, moving upwards. Make sure the dressing is applied the correct way around, absorbing side next to the skin.



5 Begin to bandage

Make sure each layer of bandage overlaps the previous layer by 50% (this will ensure that even pressure is applied, reducing the risk of complications). Continue until the orthopaedic padding is above and below the primary dressing and securely holding it in place.



8 Secure the mesh

Tape the end of the mesh bandage to secure the secondary layer. Don't tuck the loose end of the bandage into the other layers to secure it, as this will cause a pressure point, which can then lead to a sore.



9 Add the final layer

Begin to apply the self-adhesive bandage over the secondary layer, ensuring that it isn't stretched too tight. Remove all the creases as you go to create a smooth, even finish. Again, ensure that the self-adhesive bandage finishes an inch from either end of the bandage.



10 Finish the job

Apply a sticky bandage to the top and bottom of the bandage to prevent shavings or dirt entering the dressing, making sure it's not applied too tightly. Voila - a finished bandage!

Watch how to apply this bandage at www.yourhorse.co.uk/xlequine

PHOTOGRAPHY: XLEQUINE

xLequine
Excellence in Practice

Train with XLequine
Find out more about XLequine or the Bandaging Angels at www.xlequine.co.uk where you can sign up for an EquineSkills days, including first aid for your horse, on

10 September at St Boniface Veterinary Clinic, 26 September at Rosevean Veterinary Practice or 21 October at Westmorland Veterinary Group. For more information, visit www.equinekills.co.uk

WIN!

For your chance to win a free place on an EquineSkills first aid workshop worth £60, visit www.yourhorse.co.uk/win. Two runners up will also be selected to receive a £30 voucher to spend on an EquineSkills workshop of their choice.

Entries close 23 September, 2015. Full terms and conditions apply, please read these in full at www.yourhorse.co.uk/win