

How to apply a Bandage

HOW TO BANDAGE A HORSE'S LEG

Most horse persons find it necessary at some time to bandage a horse's leg. It is important that you practice the techniques before you need to bandage in an emergency. Like anything we do in life, practice makes perfect. Make sure you have on hand all the supplies needed to adequately bandage the horse before you start.

When bandaging a horse's leg it is wise to have a friend or someone else to help you. Remember even a quiet horse may need restraint to protect you if the horse reacts to pain.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BANDAGING YOUR HORSE

1. Clean wound if necessary using antiseptic solution such as Vetadine or Betadine and clean water (avoid Dettol).
2. Apply antiseptic cream either directly to the wound or onto the nonstick wound dressing.
3. Apply the non-stick dressing. The wound dressing will usually adhere to the area while you apply the padding (cotton wool, combine dressing) and the bandage.
4. Apply padding. This should go around the leg and if the cannon is being bandaged, cover from below the knee to the fetlock. A minimum of 2 cm or approximately 1 inch of padding is recommended.
5. Apply the bandage in a spiral pattern down the leg, then up again past the area of the injury, and then down again. Ensure that each successive turn overlaps the previous one by at least half of the width of the bandage. Apply uniform pressure as you bandage. It is unwise to bandage an injured leg without adequate padding as permanent damage to the tendons can occur as a result of too much pressure.
6. Finish the bandage with a small safety pin or a piece of electrician's tape.
7. **Note:** Do not allow electrician's tape to completely encircle the leg.
8. If the leg was swollen prior to bandaging you **MUST** reapply the bandage within 12 hours, as the pressure you apply during bandaging will reduce the swelling over time and the bandage may loosen and slip.
9. Only bandage as often as necessary. If there is a large amount of discharge on the bandage when you remove it, you may have to bandage more often. If there is little discharge, extend the interval between bandaging.

Pressure Points

Bandaging the more prominent joints of the horse, especially the knee and the hock, requires special consideration, with particular reference to pressure points. Prior to bandaging, stand back and mentally make a note of where the pressure points are likely to be. For instance, the knee has two important pressure points - the one on the back and the one on the inside. Adhesive bandages are usually essential for bandaging the knee and the hock. The most useful technique involves a figure of 8 configuration. Take care when bandaging near the pressure points. Do not allow the bandage to completely cover the pressure points. If you use adhesive bandages, the horse may become irritable as you remove the bandage as it will pull at the hair. Your pharmacist can supply you with a compound that will aid in dissolving the adhesive, making it easier to remove the bandage.

WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs that the bandage may be too tight include:-

- The horse finds the bandage irritating and this gets worse with time.
- The horse may chew the bandage.
- The area above the bandage swells and continues to swell.
- The area below the bandage swells indicating the bandage may be restricting the circulation. (too tight)



BE OBSERVANT

Each time you see your horse, run your eyes quickly over his body. Walk around the horse and visually check every leg and over his upper body including both eyes. If you do this on a regular basis, you will spot subtle signs of trouble before they have a chance to become serious.

You can check your horse's heart rate by placing your hand or a stethoscope head over the heart, just behind the elbow. Check the pulse by feeling the back of the fetlock or behind the knee. If you are not sure, ask your veterinarian.

Check respiration rate and abnormal breathing patterns.

Does your horse react in a normal way to your presence?

Check for unusual swellings and discharge from eyes, nostrils, and other orifices.

The normal heart rate in the horse varies greatly. On average it should be between 30-40 beats per minute at rest. Normal respiration rate is 8-10 breaths per minute but this is highly dependent on the surrounding temperature and humidity. These rates may be higher in ponies and foals. If in doubt, consult your veterinarian.

Take note of your horse's posture, e.g. pointing a front leg may indicate a problem.

Are his nostrils flared (dilated)? If so he may be in severe pain.

Check that your horse walks normally.

With a little practice this quick assessment will take no more than a minute. After all, you know your horse better than anyone! If a specific area troubles you, check more carefully.

ROAD ACCIDENT REFERENCE AND USEFUL RULES



For all injuries consult your veterinary surgeon at the earliest opportunity.

When a road accident has occurred, check there is no danger to the injured horse, yourself, and bystanders from oncoming cars.

Where blood is present, protect against any cross infection to yourself or the animal by wearing clean latex gloves..

Control bleeding by pressure with your hand or pad on the wound. Place a firm bandage over the wound as soon as possible.

Irrigate contaminated wounds with sterile saline or boiled tepid water and antiseptic solution such as Betadine, Minidine or Savlon. DO NOT use commercial household disinfectants. Solutions containing detergents (soaps, shampoos) can be very damaging to your eyes. Do not allow soaps, Savlon or other antiseptic solutions to come into contact with your eyes. Immediately wash eye liberally with water or sterile saline solution if this occurs.

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