

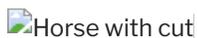
HORSES

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Treating cuts and tears in horses

Knowing how to treat horses with minor cuts and tears is important for every horse owner. This article discusses six steps to follow when treating a cut or tear.

Wounds require immediate attention and first aid treatment. The seriousness of a wound depends on the location, depth, type of cut or tear, amount of tissue damaged, and type of tissue affected. Serious wounds should be treated by a veterinarian. All cuts and tears should be cleaned thoroughly and all foreign debris removed. Apply nitrofurazone or an antiseptic ointment to the wound.



Treatment

In treating cuts and tears, there are six steps to follow.

1. The **first** step on any cut or tear is to stop the bleeding. Blood from a cut artery spurts and is bright red. Venous blood is dull red and flows rather than spurts. Direct pressure is required for almost all cuts and tears. Pack gauze into large or deep wounds and apply pressure until the bleeding stops. Very seldom will a tourniquet be needed. Apply direct pressure on a wound with a gauze pad using your hand or a tight bandage. If a tight bandage is used to stop the bleeding, it should be removed once the bleeding has stopped.

A horse can lose up to 10 percent of its blood before the loss becomes critical. A 1,000-pound (454 kg) horse has about 50 quarts of blood. A horse can tolerate a slow blood loss, whereas rapid loss of blood can be critical.

2. The **second** step is to clean the wound with warm water and to remove all dirt and debris. The best way is to use a hose with running water to clean the wound. If water is not available, use a gauze pad to clean the wound. Press the

gauze pad into the wound. Don't rub or swab the wound because that will cause further tissue damage. Avoid using cotton because pieces of it will remain in the wound. The hair should be clipped or shaved from the edge of the wound.

3. The **third** step is to immobilize the wound to prevent further damage. Hold the horse or place the horse in a box stall. Try to prevent the horse from chewing the wound or bandage. A neck cradle prevents chewing of most wounds. Cayenne pepper or hot pepper sauce applied to the bandage can discourage a horse from chewing. If the wound requires suturing, the veterinarian should do so within 12 to 24 hours for best results.

4. The **fourth** step is to prevent infection. Antibiotics should be administered under the direction of a veterinarian. Wounds can be treated with a nonirritating wound dressing. Minor skin wounds can be treated with nitrofurazone.

5. The **fifth** step is to protect the wound from dirt and other debris by applying a bandage. A bandage may decrease movement and promote faster healing of the wound. However, care must be taken when applying a bandage because, if it is applied incorrectly, it can cause more damage than good.

6. The **final** step is to prevent tetanus. If the horse has not been vaccinated against tetanus within the last eight to 12 months—or if you are unsure when its last tetanus vaccine was given—administer the tetanus antitoxin. Tetanus toxoid should be given every 8 to 12 months.

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