

# THE TOP 3 TIPS ON WOUND MANAGEMENT

## YOU WILL LEARN

| The first 3 steps of  
correct wound care

| The risk of tetanus and  
how to prevent it

| When you should  
call your vet

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Any wound over a tendon or joint is deemed an emergency.**

If you own a horse, you must be prepared for the eventuality of wounds and injuries. Horses, by their very nature, are prone to hurting themselves, even in the relative safety of your paddock at home.

To ensure your horse returns to optimum health, it's essential that you know how to apply first aid safely and correctly. In this article, we outline the immediate steps you need to take if you encounter your horse with a wound or injury.



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### Q: **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND MY HORSE WITH A WOUND?**

#### **1 Control any bleeding.**

Often, it looks like more blood than it is, but any bleeding must be stopped as quickly as possible. Most wounds will stop bleeding before blood loss becomes an issue. Using a temporary bandage, apply moderate pressure to help slow the flow of blood. If a large blood vessel is involved and bleeding won't stop, call your veterinarian immediately.

#### **2 Clean the wound.**

Wounds must be clean in order to heal properly and quickly. A gentle flow of water is the best way to remove dirt and debris. If you find your horse is experiencing too much pain during wound cleaning, you should call your veterinarian. A mild sedative will make your horse more comfortable.

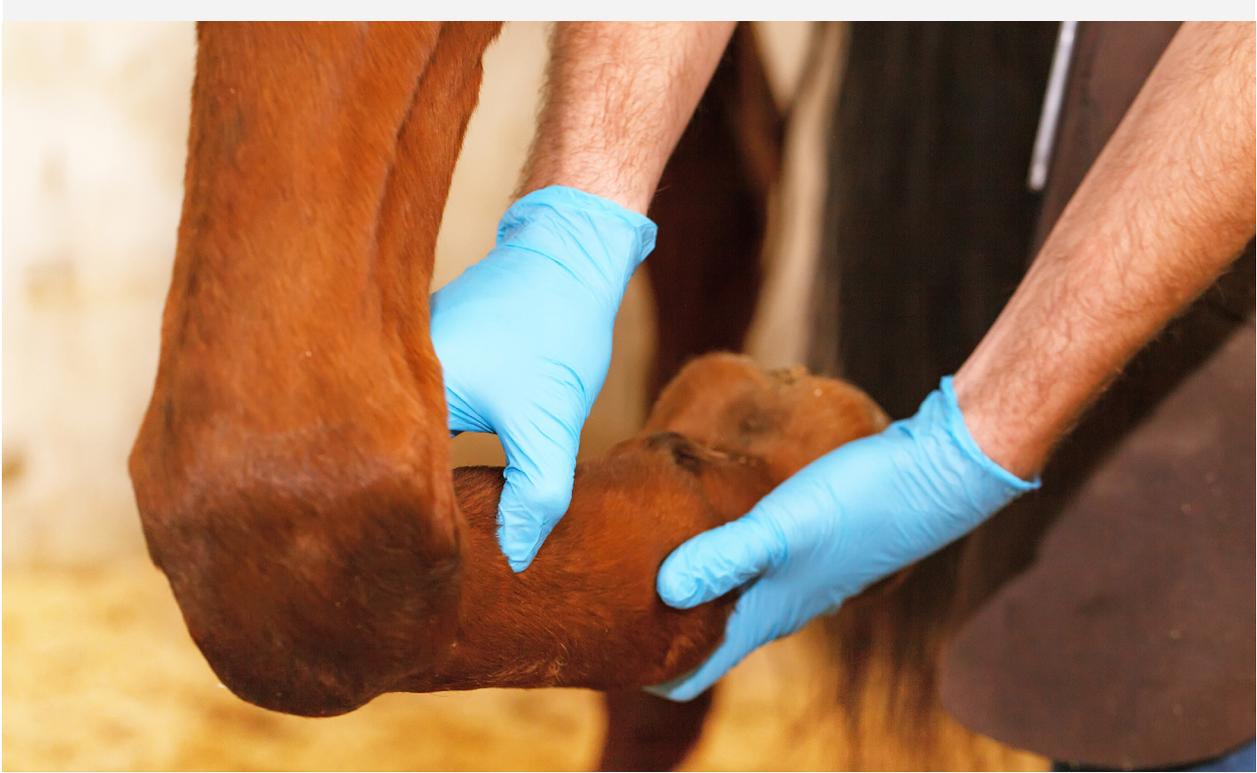
#### **3 Apply a bandage.**

Bandaging wounds high up on a horse's leg or body is usually impractical. However, for wounds on the middle to lower part of the leg, a bandage will help keep the wound clean and moist, and reduce movement of the skin edges so it can heal faster.

Bandages should contain, at the very least, a non-stick dressing and a soft, elastic, self-adhesive bandage. Be careful not to apply the bandage too tightly as it can affect blood circulation. You must also monitor bandages carefully for any slipping and rubbing.

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**Q: WHAT IF MY HORSE HASN'T BEEN VACCINATED AGAINST TETANUS?**

If your horse hasn't had a tetanus vaccine recently, your veterinarian may recommend a tetanus antitoxin needle to provide short-term protection. This is not the same as the vaccination, so it's important you understand what needle your horse is getting.

Tetanus is caused by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*, which lives in the soil and enters a wound. Even the smallest puncture is at risk of tetanus if your horse isn't vaccinated. Tetanus is very serious and often fatal. To protect against tetanus, your horse should receive an initial course of two vaccines, followed by annual boosters. When a horse has a wound, it's often wise to give them an additional booster.

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**Q: SHOULD I CLOSE THE WOUND?**

Stitching a wound can speed up healing and provide a better cosmetic result. However, this must be performed by your veterinarian. Some wounds, including many on the lower legs or those that are highly contaminated, are often best not stitched. This decision must be made by your veterinarian on a case by case basis.

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Any wound that is deeper than the skin must be examined by your veterinarian. Likewise, all eye wounds are considered emergencies.



## WHEN DO I NEED TO CALL MY VET?

Your horse may not need to see a vet for every wound. However, any wound that is deeper than the skin, or any wound over a joint or tendon, must be examined by your veterinarian. Likewise, all wounds near or involving the eye are considered emergencies and must be seen by your veterinarian.

Puncture wounds might only leave a barely detectable defect in the skin, but may be very deep, highly contaminated and involve vital structures. If you're at all unsure about the severity of your horse's wound or injury, it's best to call your veterinarian. A veterinarian is the most qualified judge to assess wounds, and administer bandaging, stitching, antibiotics or pain relief.

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## DR LOUISE COSGROVE

Having spent most of her childhood in the saddle, it was a natural transition into equine veterinary medicine for Louise, founder of Exclusively Equine Veterinary Services and HorseBarn Education. A practicing equine vet, Louise is passionate about empowering horse owners, like you, with a deeper understanding of horse health, so you can give your horse a longer, healthier future.

**If you have any questions regarding your horse, you're welcome to contact me personally.**

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