

South Shore Equine Clinic & Diagnostic Center

151 Palmer Road
Plympton, MA 02367
781-585-2611
www.ssequineclinic.com

WOUNDS

Due to their inquisitive nature, a well-developed flight response, their large size, and they are commonly confined in areas with potential obstacles such as metal or wire, horses tend to be accident prone, making both minor and major wounds a fairly common occurrence. Wounds can range in severity from simple scrapes or cuts to more extensive punctures or lacerations involving large areas of the body (e.g., after getting caught in barbed wire).

At first glance, the severity of your horse's wound(s) can be deceiving. Large wounds often bleed profusely and appear to be worse than they are; but if they only involve superficial structures, then these wounds will typically heal with minimal scarring in only a few months. In contrast, small wounds overlying (or in close proximity to) a joint or tendon, for example, are far more serious due to the potential for the underlying structures to be involved and become infected.

Be Prepared

Effectively providing first aid to an injured horse necessitates having access to the proper materials. A fully stocked first aid kit in an easily accessible location is recommended for every barn. Kits can be purchased pre-assembled or can be easily created to meet individual owners' needs.

Essential items include, but are not limited to:

- Clean towels or sterile cotton rolls to stop a wound from becoming more contaminated and to apply pressure to stop bleeding
- Vetwrap or stable wraps to hold the towels or cotton in place
- A flashlight to closely examine a wound
- Bandage scissors
- Digital thermometer and stethoscope (to monitor horse's vitals for indications of infection)

Up-to-date vaccination records for all horses in the barn should also be readily accessible. Of particular interest is the tetanus vaccine status. Tetanus is a potentially fatal neurological disease caused by toxins produced by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*. According to the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), tetanus is a core vaccine that should be administered annually.

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Immediate First Aid

Place your horse in a quiet, well-lit area to examine the wound. Be cautious as pain and fear can cause even the quietest, most predictable horse to behave in ways it normally wouldn't. Use clean or sterile towels to apply pressure directly to the wound to stop or slow the flow of blood. Try to avoid repeatedly wiping blood from the area as this will result in additional trauma to the tissues, slower clotting, and might contaminate the wound with foreign materials (such as grass, dirt, or manure). Once bleeding is under control, attempt to locate

It is not advisable to apply tourniquets or cold hose wounds. This latter intervention in particular can increase wound contamination and force foreign material even farther into the wound, which will ultimately delay wound healing. In most cases, less is more. Simply wrap the wound to minimize additional contamination, apply steady pressure to slow or stop the bleeding, keep your horse quiet, and wait for your veterinarian. Not all wounds require a frantic call to your veterinarian, but most wounds will benefit from professional evaluation.

Call Your Veterinarian

It is preferable that most wounds are examined sooner than later, particularly in cases involving important underlying structures (such as tendons), those that are contaminated with foreign materials, and if sutures are necessary. Not all wounds require suturing (stitching), but wounds that would benefit from suturing should be for better healing and a quicker return to normal activity.

If you have questions or need further information, please give us a call. We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for you and your horse.