

Table of Common Horse Ailments




Looks Like...	Ailment	Symptoms	Treatment
	<p>Cushings Disease (Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction). A tumour of the pituitary gland in the brain which regulates certain hormones causes malfunction of the gland. Usually occurs in older horses. Often linked to Equine Metabolic Syndrome.</p>	<p>Failure to shed winter coat; lethargy; repeated bouts of laminitis; excessive thirst and urination; excessive sweating; pot bellied appearance with loss of muscle tone along the top line</p>	<p>Blood test to check ACTH levels will confirm diagnosis. Restricted grazing to control laminitis. Adjustment to diet to restrict sugars and starches whilst still providing vitamins and minerals. Usually prescribed Prascend (Pergolide for humans)</p>
	<p>Laminitis. A painful condition affecting the soft tissues inside the hoof that are fundamental in supporting the horse's weight. Laminitis is usually a symptom of an underlying medical issue such as Cushings or Metabolic Syndrome rather than a standalone ailment.</p>	<p>Early stages a horse might just seem a bit off, maybe not even lame, just a bit 'foot sore' when walking. They may shift weight constantly from one foot to another. Bilateral digital pulses are a good indicator as laminitis affects pairs of feet rather than one. Later stages the horse will rock back as in the picture in an attempt to relieve the pain.</p>	<p>Removal from grass and grain feeds immediately. Deep bed to support the soles of the feet. Hay soaked for minimum 12 hours at 1.5% bodyweight per day - do not starve. Anti-inflammatory drugs may be given. Grazing/feed will have to be permanently restricted – discuss with vet. If left untreated, secondary complications can cause death.</p>
	<p>Thrush. Bacteria get into small cracks in the sole of the hoof, heels, and frog which causes an infection. This bacteria literally eats away at the tissues in the frog/heels. Known as foot rot in sheep and cattle. Often caused by continual wet and/or unsanitary conditions but can be a secondary result of chronic laminitis.</p>	<p>Very smelly hooves. Often noticed when hooves are picked out but can sometimes be smelt just when the horse is standing. Black, squashy frog and/or heels, can sometimes contain black liquid. Crumbly sole. Severe cases can be sufficient to cause lameness.</p>	<p>There are many old wives tales of things that can treat thrush and hundreds of products that claim to deal with it. None of them work, and some do more harm than good. Prevention is better than cure, keep hooves clean and dry. Best treatment is tetracycline spray which is available on prescription from the vet.</p>

Table of Common Horse Ailments







Looks Like...	Ailment	Symptoms	Treatment
	<p>Lice. Basically exactly the same as human head lice. Lice are specific to each species so you will not catch them, but you can transfer them on clothes, tack, rugs, brushes, bedding, etc to other horses.</p>	<p>Chronic itching usually around the face, ears, and neck. Parting the hairs and examining around the roots will reveal tiny bugs around 2mm long, plus clusters of white eggs which can look like dandruff. Very common, some horses seem to be more prone than others (ie Cob types with longer, thicker hair)</p>	<p>Bathing in Deosect (cypermethrin). Permethrin powders should also be used on all tack/rugs/brushes after washing on a hot cycle. All bedding must be burnt and stables disinfected. All horses that have been in contact with each other must be treated at the same time to prevent re-infection.</p>
	<p>Hoof abscess. Caused by dirt, grit, and other particles finding their way inside the hoof wall or sole through cracks. Common in winter when hooves are wet and flexible, then again in high summer when dry cracks are more prevalent. This abscess has burst out the top of the hoof on the coronet band.</p>	<p>Obvious lameness that worsens or at least does not improve after a day or so of rest and with no other obvious injury ie cuts, heat, or swelling on the leg. Horse can be fine one day and literally hopping lame the next, although some are more stoic than others. Digital pulse will be felt in the affected leg.</p>	<p>Farrier will need to attend to locate the abscess within the hoof and create a bigger hole for it to drain out. Ideally they should drain downwards rather than being forced up through the hoof. Several days poulticing to draw out any remaining infection, and then plugging of the hole to prevent re-infection.</p>
	<p>Colic. General term for abdominal pain. Several types, most common – gastric; spasmodic; sand; impaction. Any colic is a medical emergency as it can escalate quickly and left untreated it can be fatal. Can be caused by excess gases, poisoning, sand/grit (similar to gall stones), and food or other matter becoming impacted in the gut resulting in a blockage</p>	<p>Early signs can be fidgeting, turning to look at or bite at sides, sweating for no apparent reason, progressing to kicking at the stomach as in the photo and finally thrashing around on the floor. A horse in severe pain from colic once it has got to this point can be dangerous as their only consideration is relieving the excruciating pain that they are experiencing.</p>	<p>Treatment depends on the cause and type of colic. Prompt veterinary attention gives the best chance of a positive prognosis; sand and impaction colic often require major surgery.</p>

Table of Common Horse Ailments

Looks Like...	Ailment	Symptoms	Treatment
	<p>Sweet itch. Very common in ponies. Caused by an allergic reaction to midge bites.</p>	<p>Scratching the mane and tail to the point of bleeding. Long standing sufferers may have thickened, wrinkly skin on the top of the tail and base of mane.</p>	<p>Avoid turnout at dusk and dawn. Open hill pastures are best, and certainly away from damp/wet areas, streams, etc, muck heaps, and wooded areas. Strong fly repellent and special fly rugs to prevent midges from biting. Excessive scratching can be controlled by oral steroids (prednisolone)</p>
	<p>Mud fever. Another bacterial nasty! Caused by bacteria found in wet mud. If the legs are continually wet and muddy this is more likely. Does not seem to affect Cob types so long as they are left their natural protection of feathers (leg hair). Thin skinned and horses with white on the lower legs seem more prone.</p>	<p>Sore, cracked heels with scabs which reveal pus like fluid underneath. Lower legs will often also be puffy, tight, and hot. Horse may be lame depending on severity.</p>	<p>Removal from muddy/wet areas into dry stable. Dry legs and keep dry. Can be very painful so may need vet assistance to sedate horse initially. Do not pick the scabs off! Treat with a gentle antibacterial spray or cream, keep the legs dry, and moisturise the skin to soften the scabs. Bad cases can be treated with steroid cream (betamethasone)</p>
	<p>Equine influenza. Airborne viral disease. Vaccinations are available. The horse and any others in contact should be isolated immediately as it is highly contagious. Not generally life threatening but can be in elderly, young, or immune-compromised horses.</p>	<p>Lethargy; high temperature (39-41c) which lasts for more than 4 days; snotty nose which may have started as clear fluid; persistent harsh dry cough; enlarged glands under the lower jaw; loss of appetite; lower limb swelling.</p>	<p>Diagnosis should be made by a vet as flu can be mistaken for strangles and vice versa. As it is a viral infection there is no medication available but you should aim to make the horse more comfortable by ensuring there is minimal dust in his feed and environment, feeding from the floor, and giving him at least two weeks total rest from any work. Dilaterol may be prescribed if his breathing is particularly bad.</p>