

L-Mesitran in the treatment of bacterial pyoderma on the back of the fetlock of horses

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Abstract

Last winter was very long and cold which usually reduces the incidence of bacterial pyoderma on the back of the fetlock and lower parts of the legs. The disease also goes under the name grease heel or mud fever. Usually the incidence is higher during periods of wet and humid conditions in spring and summer. Surprisingly there has been a high incidence of these fetlock problems during the cold and dry winter especially in the middle of Sweden and in trotters at the major Solvalla race course. This has resulted in many horses admitted for a race being withdrawn at a late stage.

One of the most affected stables has been the famous and very successful trotting trainer Stig H Johansson's stable.

Anders Ekfalk, who is the treating veterinarian at Stig H Johansson's stable, says that the unusual feature of these fetlock problems has been that perfectly healthy horses have developed such serious fetlock problems within hours, so that they have been unable to race.

Anders Ekfalk decided to consult the veterinarian Kerstin Bergvall, a European specialist in veterinary dermatology (dipECVD), for a thorough investigation. Rich bacterial growth of mixed bacteria of the normal flora was found on the affected horses. Kerstin initiated a treatment schedule that has had a good effect and Anders Ekfalk says that he would like to share this information with other trainers and veterinarians that have affected horses.

Kerstin Bergvalls treatment recommendations

Problem – inflamed skin on the lower parts of the legs (especially the fetlock area) of many horses

Investigation – microscopy (cytology) shows very rich growth of an unspecific mixed bacterial flora.

Cause – damages of the skins natural protective barrier due to scratches, humidity, ice and frost damages etc, makes it possible for the normal bacterial flora to penetrate the skin and cause an infection.

Treatment Scheme

Mild cases

- Apply Alcogel with or without L-Mesitran Soft gel afterwards (no withdrawal time for competition).
- Repeat the treatment once or twice daily. If once, do it after taking the horse back in to the stable.

Moderate cases

- Massage with undiluted Vetriderm B-Peroxidase shampoo only on affected areas and let it work for 10-15 minutes before wiping it off with a damp towel.
- Apply Alcogel, preferably with L-Mesitran Soft Gel afterwards.
- Repeat the procedure twice daily.

Severe/deeper infections

- Treat as above
- NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) for example Finadyne or Metacam (withdrawal time before competition!)
- If no effect within a week – treat with antibiotics too. Antibiotics (Trimetoprim sulfa or penicillin) should then be given until the infection has healed.

Prophylactic care

- Avoid unnecessary washing of the legs – it weakens the skin barrier.
- Disinfect the inner side of boots with alcohol before and after use.
- Apply Alcogel on the fetlocks daily in the evening/when the horses stay inside.
- Fatty ointment that does not dry out the skin and that protects the skin against the moisture. Use for example Hipposan ointment.
- At times of extreme cold (colder than -10 degrees Celsius) nothing should be smeared on the horses legs, since this can cause frost damages. Apply Alcogel when the horse is taken back in instead.
- At times of wet weather conditions, mud or wet snow, the skin is well protected by a fatty ointment.