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EXTRA

STOCKING THE TACK ROOM

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Stocking the Tack Room

Here's an easy reference to take stock of what you have, what you need and what you should keep in your tack room.

By Nancy S. Loving, DVM

What do you have in your tack room to deal with emergency and routine concerns of your horses? Anybody who owns a horse is familiar with how much trouble a horse can get into, necessitating some basic first-aid efforts. Added to that, there are many other items that help you with general horse care. Let's take a look at some non-prescription supplies that are good to have on hand to keep your horses healthy and well cared for. Many of these are available over the counter or can be delivered directly to your door through online "pharmacies" (which often have a wide offering of equine products that don't require a prescription).



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Two essential tools important to evaluating your horse's vital signs are a thermometer and a stethoscope.

Two Basics You Need

Essential tools are important for evaluating your horse's vital signs. Every horse owner should have a thermometer and a stethoscope available.

Rectal thermometer—It's always a good idea to have a way to measure a horse's temperature, especially when your horse is not feeling quite right. Any time he shows malaise or poor appetite, or he isn't making sufficient manure, it's good to check his temperature. According to the American Association of Equine Practitioners, an adult horse at rest should have a body temperature of 99 to 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Anything above that level can indicate an active infection. (The normal temperature



Different types of bandaging materials and bandage scissors are necessary items in any tack room.

range for a foal is 99.5 to 102.1 F.)

To obtain a reading, a mercury-based thermometer can be inserted for about two minutes, or you can use a digital unit inserted until it beeps (less time and safer for horses).

Stethoscope—A stethoscope doesn't have to be an expensive investment, but having one but is helpful to take a heart rate and to listen to intestinal sounds in the event your horse seems colicky. Then you can relay that information to your veterinarian. Place the bell of the stethoscope behind the horse's left elbow and count each "lub-dub" as one beat. Count for 15 seconds and multiply by four to get beats per minute (bpm). Normal horses have a heart rate of 28-44 bpm at rest. Pain will cause an elevation in heart rate, often above 60 bpm. Listen to intestinal sounds in both flanks—these will sound similar to your stomach rumbles when you're hungry. There are two quadrants (upper and lower) on the left flank, and the large area on the right flank tracks sounds from the cecum.

Minor Injury Supplies

While it might be necessary to have your

vet out to treat a significant injury, there are things you can do to help limit infection by cleaning and dressing a wound. To do this, here are a few things to have on hand.

Tamed iodine (Betadine) solution and scrub—Add the solution to saline or clean water so it approximates the color of weak tea, which is about 10 ml tamed iodine per liter (or quart) of water. When you scrub a wound with the soapy version (scrub), be sure to rinse it thoroughly from the wound. Note: Don't use high-pressure water directly in the wound when first rinsing, as you can drive debris deeper into the wound.

Chlorhexidine (Nolvasan) solution and scrub—Add 20 ml of this solution to clean water or saline. As above, rinse the scrub thoroughly from the wound after cleaning.

Sterile saline—This is usually available non-prescription and is useful for wound or eye cleaning.

A **clean bucket** or container to use for cleansing a wound. It's good to keep one just for this purpose so it doesn't have dirt or residue from other uses.

Gauze sponges for wound scrubbing

Wound ointment—Use water-soluble



A hemostatic product is useful to have to stop bleeding of small equine wounds or minor injuries.

products such as silver sulfadiazine cream or chlorhexidine cream when possible. Stay away from petroleum-based products and sprays as they can make suturing a wound quite difficult.

Hemostatic powder is useful to help slow bleeding.

Non-stick dressing to place over a cleaned wound will be beneficial when you try to change dressings.

Padding for bandaging—Roll gauze, roll or sheet cotton, diapers, or sanitary pads placed over a non-stick dressing pad should be used to cover a wound before applying an outer bandage.

Elastikon bandage material or stretchy bandage like Vetrap or Co-Flex to wrap a wound. Keep in mind that Vetrap-type material can be applied too tightly as it doesn't give, so it is always best to pad the leg with cotton or something similar before applying. The greater "stretchability" of Elastikon can reduce the risk of bandage constriction if you aren't proficient at bandaging.

Chewing deterrent—Some horses will chew on a leg bandage enough to tear it apart. Chewing deterrent products sprayed on a bandage leave a bitter taste that discourages the horse from touching the bandage. These products can also deter a bored or fiber-deficient horse from chewing on fencing or posts.

Bandage scissors—These have blunt ends on them to protect against accidental injury if a horse suddenly moves while you are cutting off a bandage.

Rubber or latex-free gloves are important when you are taking care of wounds or to apply salves or ointments.

Hydrogen peroxide is useful to clean blood from the leg. It should not be used directly on a wound.



It's great to have a set of shoe-pulling tools; learn from your veterinarian or farrier how to use them properly.



Ice packs that get cold chemically for one-time use are great to have on hand.



Most tack rooms keep a variety of bandaging materials, including Vetrap, for routine use and for emergency use.

Vaseline-based ointment can be used to smear beneath a draining wound to prevent skin scalding from the leaking serum. It is also useful for protecting the skin of the hindquarters if a horse has urine dribbling or diarrhea.

Musculoskeletal injuries can benefit from the application of cold therapy.

Ice packs—There are two types of ice packs; one is kept in the freezer and others “activate” to get cold when you break or massage the contents inside the ice pack. These are invaluable for post-exercise cold therapy or to manage inflammation and swelling of a wound or musculoskeletal injury.

Eye issues or injuries are critical. When wind or a fall causes dust or debris to get in a horse's eye, horse owners should have available an **eye lubricant**. This usually something like sterile artificial tears in an ointment form that helps soothe a painful eye.

Rinse the eye with sterile eye wash or saline first (if possible), then apply the ointment. It will really help with your horse's discomfort until your vet can come by to examine the eye.

Routine Vet Care—Oral Products

Routine veterinary care depends on oral products. These can range from the syringes used to dose or treat injuries or wounds to the oral products horse owners often need.

Dewormer syringes—While this is not necessarily a first-aid item, it falls under medical care, so it is a good idea to have a supply of deworming medication on hand for when your horse comes due for treatment. Ideally, have your veterinarian perform once- or twice-yearly fecal egg counts to determine how often you need to deworm each horse. The tests ensure you are using a product that is effective against internal parasites specific to your farm.

Oral dose syringes are often needed to provide oral medication. You also might

want to have a supply of other syringes and needles for injectable products.

Psyllium—Feeding psyllium pellets (or powder) monthly for a week helps move sand and dirt through the bowels. Psyllium coupled with a high-forage diet achieves the best clearance.

Information on Hand

Pertinent information to have in the tack room where it is accessible to you, your agent and your vet:

- Insurance cards with your horse's information as well as your veterinarian's phone number and contact info, plus information for a back-up veterinarian
- Instructions on equine emergency care and someone who can take charge to make decisions on your behalf. Would you authorize treatment or surgery, and if so, to what dollar amount? Leave credit card information with someone in charge of your horse. That might be your veterinarian, who might need to refer a horse to a referral hospital. Would you authorize euthanasia if you could not be contacted in a timely fashion? These instructions can help save a horse from unnecessary procedures and help limit pain and suffering.
- Poison control center contact number
- An equine first-aid book is a helpful tool to walk you through methods to perform basic first aid procedures.

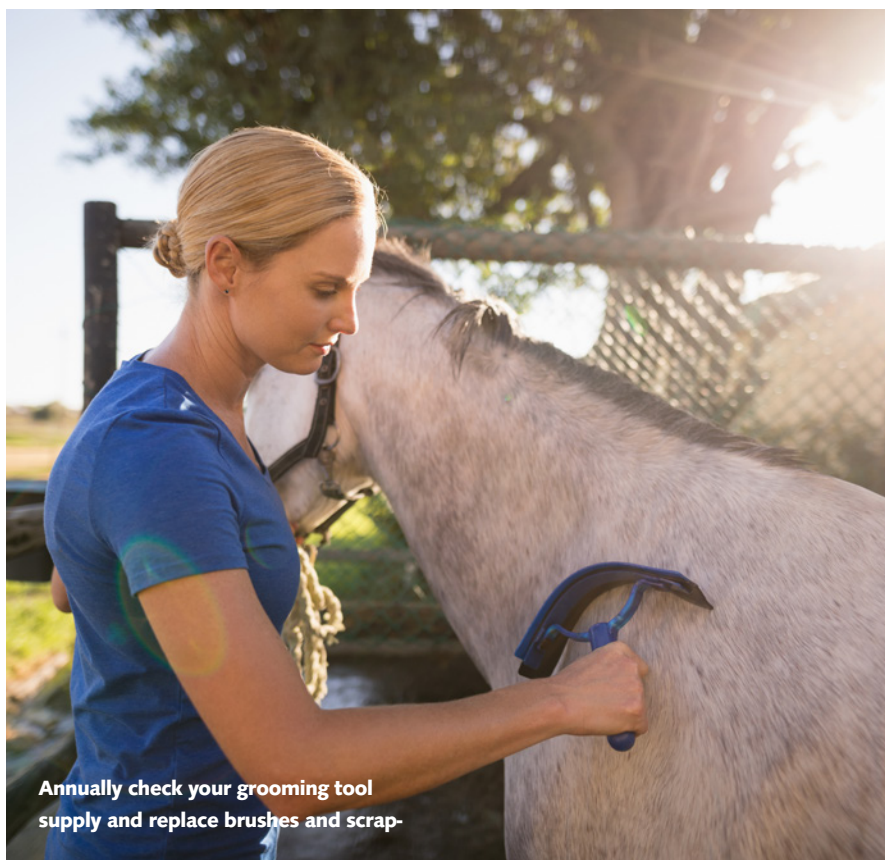
General Care Items

As mentioned before, when you are stocking your tack room, you need a lot of items to care for horses and facilities. You also should check and make sure that any expired or old items are replaced on an annual basis.

Brushes—Every horse deserves a good grooming at least a few times a week. This gives you an opportunity to look for any blemishes or wounds so you can be proactive about care and to identify behavioral quirks when you groom. Select a variety of tools with which your horse likes to be groomed.

Hoof pick—Daily cleaning of your horse's feet helps to identify any problems and also lets you remove filth, debris and stones from the hooves.

You should keep a **small stiff brush** for scrubbing the hooves or other tack and equipment.



Annually check your grooming tool supply and replace brushes and scrap-



Keep regular and medicated shampoos on hand so you can address issues immediately.

Lip chain or twitch—Sometimes it is necessary to apply some restraint to your horse to allow you to care for a problem. Consult with your veterinarian as to

proper technique to use items such as a lip chain or twitch if you are not familiar with them.

Shampoo and mane/tail conditioner—Most horses don't need a lot of bathing, but when their coats get particularly dirty or smelly, it's good to give a deep clean to remove caked-in material and grime. A gentle shampoo product is a good bet, and in some cases, you might want to use one with a mild antiseptic. It's best to bathe

your horse in reasonably warm weather to avoid a chill. Rinse the skin thoroughly to avoid irritation.

Sweat scraper—This tool is handy for removing excess water following a bath or for cooling efforts during and after exercise.

Sheath cleaning products—For a gelding that tolerates you delving into his private parts, once or twice a year sheath cleaning can help with hygiene and deter insect nuisance in sensitive penile areas. Stay safe and only proceed if your horse is willing; otherwise have your vet perform the procedure when the horse is sedated. Be sure not to clean the sheath too often as antiseptics and cleaning products remove good and desirable (commensal) bacteria that keep pathogens at bay.

Insect control/fly spray—Pyrethrins and pyrethroids are the safest products to use. These can be sprayed on or wiped on to help improve your horse's comfort during fly season.

Horse treats—While not everyone feeds horse treats, for those who do, there are a variety of these yummys for rewarding or treating your horse. Use treats dis-



Keep something on hand to keep horses from chewing bandages, fences or posts.

criminally, as many contain sugars that can exacerbate endocrine issues in an insulin resistant animal or Cushing's individual.

Salt block or lick—There are plenty of these from which to choose, in loose or block form. Try a couple of different products to find out which your horse prefers. Be sure to store the salt in a tub sheltered from the weather but easily accessible for your horse. If you show, make sure to take the smaller salt blocks with you to ensure your horse is maintaining his salt and water intake.

Duct or Gorilla tape for the inevitable repair needs

Hoof pulling tools—A file to rasp off nail heads and pliers to help pull off a loose or twisted shoe are great to have around the barn or horse trailer. Have your farrier or veterinarian show you the correct way to pull a shoe so you don't inadvertently pull off hoof wall.

Sharp knife—This ideally should be kept on your person for quick access to free a tied horse if a rope or halter becomes entangled and the horse begins to freak out. Don't put yourself in danger; it's better to let the horse struggle than for you to end up in the hospital.

Wire cutters—You need these to repair fencing or extricate a horse that has gotten trapped in fencing.

Take-Home Message

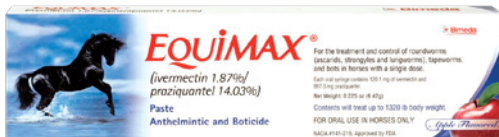
Having a well-supplied tack room at your farm or even in your horse trailer means you have what you need when you need it. Keep in mind that many products and supplies kept in the tack room might prove attractive to young children or pets. It is smart to lock such items into a high cabinet, far out of reach, to prevent inadvertent ingestion and poisoning. **SM**

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