

Mud Fever

This is a group of diseases of horses causing irritation and dermatitis in the lower limbs of horses. Mud Fever affects most horses and ponies during the winter and early spring resulting in painful sores and scabs, which in severe cases can make a horse lame. Mud Fever most commonly affects the pastern and heel area but can also affect the upper leg, the stomach region and in some cases the neck area. Non-pigmented skin tends to be more severely affected.



Under normal circumstances the skin acts as a protective barrier, preventing micro-organisms from entering the horses system and doing any damage. However the integrity of the epidermis can become compromised through the abrasion of soil grit, sand or stable bedding on cold, wet skin. The continual wetting of the skin causes a breakdown of the protective barrier of the epidermis, allowing the bacterium to enter and cause infection. Shared boots, leg wraps, grooming equipment and supplies and horse handlers hands can all serve as fomites, carrying the causative organisms from one individual to another. For this reason, this condition should be treated as contagious and precautions taken not to let it spread to others.

Horses and ponies standing for hours in muddy wet pastures and gateways is a common sight during the winter months. These conditions allow mud fever to thrive and it can be very difficult to clear once it has got a hold. As with any bacterial infection, Mud fever can become very serious very quickly.



The legs can become swollen and very sore and open sores can become infected quickly.

Prevention: Prevention is always better than cure. Avoid leaving horses out for prolonged periods in wet muddy conditions where this bacteria can thrive. Rotate paddocks more often and avoid very wet muddy gateways.

Washing the infected area with antiseptic solution can be part of the treatment for mud fever but washing a horses legs repeatedly can remove the natural oils and may allow the condition to become established. The legs should be dried thoroughly after washing with very absorbent paper towels.

The Vet should be called if you feel your horse has these symptoms and a treatment and preventative system set up immediately to keep the condition from getting worse and to hopefully improving it

At the Moorcroft centre we have had much success avoiding this horrible condition by preventing it with many of the Aloe Vera products from Forever Living. But more importantly, not leaving horses standing out in mud all day. A big dry barn or stable, in wet weather, with lots of hay fed from the floor will certainly help not to let this horrible, painful disease get a hold.