

AN OWNER'S GUIDE TO ALOE VERA

What is Aloe Vera?

It is a succulent plant that has been used for centuries for both cosmetic and medicinal purposes. It can be used topically or can be ingested into the body where the plant's unique mix of nutrients is thought to promote healing. After seeing first-hand the benefits of home grown Aloe Vera for burns and wounds in The Gambia, Colin from Equitait Veterinary Practice has maintained an interest in the potential healing properties of this plant.



Strategic Use

We would always recommend you consult your veterinary surgeon prior to using Aloe Vera products and stress that it is important that any use of Aloe Vera is integrated into a wider care programme for your horse. As vets, once we are called to examine a horse we will often wish to use what we believe are more targeted and powerful therapeutic products. However, we recognise Aloe Vera as having a place in our therapeutic armoury and acknowledge its use in certain conditions. We also acknowledge that some of our clients will wish to use this product alongside more traditional veterinary treatments. Optimal therapy in most conditions will combine certain management changes along with the use of products. Your vets are best placed to give advice on the management changes as well as selecting appropriate therapeutic product(s) and regime. In certain circumstances Aloe Vera may help to alleviate some of the clinical symptoms but it is important to also identify and treat the underlying cause.

Dosage and Administration

The oral product can be given in food or water or directly into the mouth. The dose can be split into equal portions throughout the day with larger horses requiring more pro rata than smaller horses and ponies.

When using Aloe Vera oral gel most clinicians would use the following daily dose rates for the average 500kg horse:

Treatment Dose - 250mls

Initial Maintenance Dose - 120mls

Long Term Maintenance Dose - 60mls

Where possible introduce the product slowly, using 10% of the intended dose for the first few days before building this up to the full dose.



Specific Conditions:

Aloe Vera appears to work best on conditions that involve epithelial cells (e.g. the skin) and processes involving the immunological system.

The below conditions are where we have either seen the benefits first hand or can see the rationale for its use. There are however many other conditions which may benefit from its use although it should not be considered a 'cure all'.

- **Wounds** - we have used Aloe Vera Gelly successfully as an alternative to or alongside hydrogel. We would not use it instead of Manuka Honey but have often used it at the same time with positive results. Topical Aloe Vera Gelly is thought to increase the rate of healing wounds whilst reducing excess granulation tissues, scarring and bacterial population of the wound.
- **Burns** - a number of veterinary and medical literature advocates the use of Aloe Vera in the treatment of burns for the above reasons.
- **Ringworm** - we would generally prescribe an anti-fungal agent to speed up resolution of ringworm. However, because Aloe Vera encourages exfoliation of the keratin layers of the skin that contains the ringworm it can be used alongside an antifungal to aid resolution.
- **Equine Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Post Viral Syndrome** - These relatively poorly understood syndromes can be frustrating to treat. However because of the suspected underlying causes there is rationale for the use of Aloe Vera at the above treatment dose for 3-5 weeks.

There are no documented side effects although clinicians who regularly use Aloe Vera talk about noticing a 'healing crisis' with reference to skin disease in some cases. This refers to a period of approximately 5 to 10 days where it is believed that an increase in the rate of healing can lead to the skin looking worse before it looks better.