

EQUITAIT VETERINARY PRACTICE FACTSHEET LEG MITES - CHORIOPTIC MANGE

'Feather Mites' (Chorioptic mange) is a common cause of dermatitis in horses and ponies.



Infestation with the chorioptes mite typically affects the lower limbs but can spread to other regions such as the base of the tail and the body. The hind legs are most commonly involved, with heavily feathered legs being more susceptible.

Symptoms are often worse during colder times of the year possibly due to increased housing and the fact the mite has increased activity in colder weather.

Equine chorioptic mange can frequently be a component of a multifactorial pastern dermatitis and can often be a complicating factor in long standing cases of 'mud fever' (dermatophilus).

The life cycle of the mite is approximately 3-4 weeks, but it can live for up to 69 days away from the host under suitable conditions.

Clinical signs

- Itchiness (pruritus)
- Stamping of the feet, scratching, rubbing or biting affected areas
- Secondary lesions including:
 - Hair loss (alopecia),
 - Crusting
 - Scaling
 - Thickening of the skin (lichenification)
 - Open skin (excoriations).



A painful exudative dermatitis with secondary bacterial infection can develop in more severe cases.

Diagnosis

Typically made on clinical signs and subsequent response to treatment

Microscopy with scrapings or tape impressions can be useful to visualize the mite for a definitive diagnosis.

Treatment

There are no products licensed specifically for Chorioptic mange in the horse however the following products can be used under the cascade system

- Doramectin (Dectomax) – a single injection should reduce the mite load by over 95%, and often provide relief within 4-7 days. Repeating the dose after approximately 14 days is worthwhile to further reduce the population or in cases that have not responded to the first injection. It is licensed for treatment in cattle and sheep and has sustained activity being released slowly from fat stores.
- Fipronil (Frontline Spray) – this is applied so as to dampen the haircoat and skin surface from the foot to the level of the stifle or elbow (100-250ml applied per horse) The fipronil accumulates in and then is slowly released from glands of the hair follicles. Do not wash the horse within 48 hours of treatment and do not use on open skin.
- 1% selenium sulphide shampoo - whole body wash. Repeat 3 times at 5 day intervals, leaving on for 10 mins prior to rinsing.
- Ivermectin - oral wormer – It is thought that this will have some effect at keeping infestation levels down.
- Clipping the affected areas or limbs will often aid treatment and reduce the likelihood of recurrence of infestation.
- During treatment it is recommended that the stables and the stable equipment should be cleansed and disinfected and any bedding disposed of. It is also worth treating other in contact horses particularly those that are likely to susceptible.