

SUMMER SORES AKA HABRONEMA

WHAT IS IT?

Summer sores are a granular dermatitis usually found near mucous membranes such as the corners of the eye, corners of the mouth, or the urethra or in open wounds. This results in an area that resembles proud flesh and becomes a non-healing wound.

HOW DO HORSES GET IT?

This disease occurs because of an interruption of the normal life cycle of certain stomach worms (Habronema or Draschia species). With the help of flies, the life cycle is interrupted: stomach worm larvae (found in horse feces) are carried by adult flies to moist areas on the horse's body (mucous membranes, eyes, open wounds, etc) and transferred to the skin. The larvae try to migrate to the horse's stomach, but cannot, and become stuck in place. The surrounding tissues reject the invading larvae and become irritated. The horse's body then produces white or yellow sulfur granules (calcified material) to try to heal.

HOW TO TREAT IT?

Unfortunately the area cannot heal while the larvae and resulting sulfur granules are present in the tissue.

- 1.) Debridement is the primary treatment, however some very mild cases may improve with just anti-inflammatories and Ivermectin deworming.
- 2.) Ivermectin is important to give at the first sign as a double dose, then continue with a regular dose of Ivermectin every month til the wound is healed.
- 3.) Flymasks or bandaging can be very helpful while the wound heals to prevent reinfection.
- 4.) If the area cannot be covered then flyspray or ointments can be beneficial.
- 5.) Topical ointments or sprays containing steroids can help decrease the inflammation in the tissue.
- 6.) The sheath, however, is a very difficult area to manage for two reasons. One is that most horse owners have a difficult time treating that area themselves. Two is that the area is very hard to cover. There is a product called the Alpha Sheath Shield that may be purchased if necessary.

HOW TO PREVENT IT?

Since flies are the primary culprit in terms of transmission controlling fly populations or fly exposure can help decrease the incidence. The other side of the problem is internal parasite infections, it is important to deworm horses on an appropriate schedule. Fly predators, good sanitary practices like cleaning stalls or paddocks every day can help. Daily application of flyspray and flymasks can be very helpful. Also addressing summer sores early can prevent them from becoming a larger and more difficult problem.



Please feel free to call us with any questions!
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