



# Equestrian

GUIDE



# Addressing Hoof Abscesses

One of the most painful issues for your horses can be hoof abscesses. As a responsible owner, it is in your best interest to be able to quickly identify and treat them before they become too serious.

## WHAT IS AN ABSCESS?

Abscesses are quite often associated with changes in the moisture content in the soil or environment. If the hoof becomes compromised by cracking or splitting, bacteria can seep into the hoof.

This leads to an abscess and the pain associated with it.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The symptoms related to a hoof abscess usually come on suddenly. You will notice your horse experiencing severe discomfort and lameness, almost to the point of being immobilized.

Some horse owners have compared the look of a horse with an abscessed hoof to having a broken leg.

If you notice a puncture wound to the hoof or serious discomfort in your horse, immediate veterinary attention is suggested. Veterinarians worry about cuts becoming infected and impacting the ligaments, tendons or joints.

## SIGNS OF AN ABSCESS

Veterinarian professionals use special tools to accurately identify a hoof abscess. If you don't have a hoof tester, you can feel for heat or a pulse in the hoof. This is a sign that bacteria have tracked into a sensitive region of the hoof.

If you required a home visit,



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pay attention to how your veterinarian assesses the abscess. He can likely teach you how to analyze the foot for digital pulses and increased heat in the hoof. He might be able to recommend training for using

hoof testers for future use, as well.

Hoof testers are relatively inexpensive and can help ease your mind when assessing these types of hoof-related issues.

## HOW DO I TREAT IT?

After examining and cleaning the hoof, the next step to treating an abscess is to soak the hoof. Use a bucket of warm water and Epsom salts — as well as any other medicated

solutions recommended by your veterinarian.

Don't hesitate to call your vet for a home visit if you feel overwhelmed with the treatment plan. The key is keeping your horse calm and relaxed.



# Tips For Better Jumping

Is there a better feeling than executing the perfect jump atop your show horse? That special moment when horse and rider become one for a challenging jump is indescribable. But just because it looks like an effortless jump doesn't mean it's easy.

Jumping is an art that involves timing, discipline and plenty of practice. If you're just getting started in jumping, there are numerous ways to improve your skills.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT CONFIDENCE

When it comes to training for that big jump, it's important to build confidence — in both you and your horse.

Don't start too high. A young horse's courage should be put to the test against smaller jumps or no jumps at all. Allow the horse to form a confidence in its gait first before it ever take to the air.

Start with flatwork basics before your next jumping session. Just like a world-class athlete, your horse will not perform at its peak without a proper warmup session.

If your horse loses confidence for any reason during a jump session — which is bound to happen — don't stress over the results. Forcing your horse to handle jumps it isn't ready for can lead to injury or loss of confidence. Lower the jump and try again.

## TROT BEFORE YOUR RUN

Every great horse masters the trot before the jump. Trotting teaches your horse to remain calm on the approach to fences. It also encourages



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proper technique prior to the jump.

There is nothing wrong with a slow and steady approach. This goes for your attitude

during the session, as well.

Your horse will follow your lead. Are you anxious and high-strung during training? If yes, your horse will likely be, as

well. That's no way to execute a strong jump.

Find a good ground helper to keep you focused on the training. An assistant can lower

jumps or give you feedback on your horse's performance. The more people who are rewarding your horse, the better for his confidence.



# How to Own Show Day

**A**fter all the training, sweat and tears, it's finally time for the big competition. You've seen your horse grow by leaps and bounds, but how will he perform in front of an audience? Will he keep his cool or succumb to the extra noise and activity? Will you be able to calm your nerves enough to give your horse the leadership and guidance he needs?

These questions are completely normal. If you weren't asking them, you probably wouldn't be cut out for competition.

The key to a strong show-day performance is overcoming these internal struggles and external pressures.

Remember how much work you have put into this day and seize the opportunity to show everyone around you how far you've come.

Here are some tips for overcoming the nerves and channeling your inner competitor to thrive on show day.

## **DON'T ASK TOO MUCH FROM YOUR HORSE**

By this point, no one knows your horse like you do. That comes with the responsibility of knowing how far you are able to push your horse on competition day.

Stick to the routine you've worked through during the months leading up to the show. Keeping your horse in a controlled, quiet environment on competition morning is a great start to the day. Once show time nears, keep the

horse on its regular schedule in terms of exercise, diet and rest. The more you can keep the same, the more natural the horse will feel when the time comes to jump, race or show off. Keep things simple and watch your horse rise to the occasion.

## **SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**

Is this your horse's first jump? Are you going against competition with many more years of experience? We all want to be part of the underdog story, but it's important to set realistic expectations of what your horse can achieve on show day.

Even riders atop the most experienced horses make mistakes. Allow yourself some leeway when it comes to pulling off a perfect performance.

If your goals are too lofty, you'll have no chance of enjoying a second-, third- or even fourth-place performance.

Remember why you got into this game — to have fun, compete and build a strong relationship with your favorite animal.

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# Buying a Horse

Shopping for a new horse can be one of the most exciting experiences for an owner. It also can be expensive, stressful and complicated if you aren't prepared.

With technology and social media platforms, there are more search methods at your disposal than ever before. How do you know where to start? What kinds of challenges will you face along the way?

Here are three tried-and-true tips to the perfect horse search:

## KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Can you find what you want at the grocery store without a list? Sure, but you will likely find your cart filled with goodies you don't need and didn't plan to buy.

Defining your needs, budget and goals is critical in the horse-buying experience. If you're looking to buy a show horse, you'll want to have a clear idea of the horse's skills and background.

Are you looking for young and raw, or veteran and experienced? Knowing what type of horse you're seeking can help simplify the shopping process from the start.

## PUT IN YOUR HOMEWORK

With technology aiding your



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shopping experience, there is no reason to be underprepared for your hunt for the perfect horse.

Use social media and the internet to search through photos of horses on the market. Find credible performance reports online and search

through their databases.

With the amount of research tools at your fingertips, you should feel like an empowered, educated shopper every step along the way.

## INCLUDE OTHERS

Don't approach at the shop-

ping experience alone.

Especially if this is your first horse, surround yourself with people who have been through the process before.

Ask someone you trust to accompany you while you pet and ride your new potential horse. This extra pair of eyes

can spot things you may be overlooking in the excitement of the moment.

Enlist the help of your veterinarian to conduct a pre-purchase exam. Skipping this step can leave you holding the bag for expensive medical issues or even surgeries.



# Staying Safe on the Trail

If you're like most riders, the first hint of spring weather has you — and your horse — chomping at the bit. Where there is warmer weather, there is trail riding through serene, stunning landscapes across America.

While you may be excited to dust off your saddle and riding gear, keep in mind that safety comes first when hitting the trail. Follow these tips to make sure you and your horse have a great riding experience.

## KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Have you ever snaked through a windy trail only to find you can't make your way back? Keep a GPS-enabled smartphone on you at all times to keep track of your whereabouts.

Remember to map out your route ahead of time and stick to the trail, especially if you're riding solo. The last thing you want to happen is to get lost and lose cell phone reception. Take your time and keep track of where you are at all times.

## KNOW YOUR EXPERTISE

Trails are generally ranked and marked according to their



difficulty. Are you a beginner, intermediate or advanced rider?

This is important to know to make sure you don't get in over your head. Your horse's level of knowledge and your riding experience are critical components of a safe ride. If you don't take these into consideration,

you might find yourself battling terrain that is too difficult for your horse to endure.

## KNOW YOUR HORSE

Always stay alert during a long trail ride. If you know that certain animals, weather or terrain spook your horse, steer clear of these situations.

Keep your reins in a position in which you can easily gain control when needed, especially if your horse is known to be jumpy. Know your horse's favorite snacks and reward him after a long day on the trail.

## KNOW YOUR GROUP

Trail riding alone is a danger-

ous activity. Experts recommend a buddy system, not only for your own good but for the good of your horse.

Having a buddy system can be critical in emergency situations. It also helps create a safer, more enjoyable riding experience for all riders and horses in your group.



# Starting an Equine Business

**E**nterprising professionals looking to make their mark in a hot industry need look no further than equine.

Horses are big business in the United States. According to the American Horse Council, there are more than 9 million horses kept for sport or recreation across the country.

The large number of horses should be seen as a big opportunity for entrepreneurs. Every horse needs grooming, medical care and general upkeep over the years.

Building your own boarding stable can be a worthwhile investment, especially if you live in a state with a large number of horses. Taking an interest in equine medicine could pay off, particularly if you have a love for horses and their health.

But what kind of experience does it take to create a stable, dependable equine business? Here are a few questions to ask yourself prior to choosing your segment of business.

## **Do I have the proper facility and equipment?**

If you're looking to build your own boarding operation, you'll need at least one barn with stalls, locked fields, mowing equipment, water troughs, bedding and areas to store food.

If this is too big of an invest-

ment for you, it might be time to consider ancillary services such as shoe care or grooming that can fit with your inventory and experience level.

## **Am I legally cleared to run my business?**

Legal hurdles can be another barrier to entry for prospec-

tive boarding stable owners. It is crucial that boarding stables are in proper compliance with state and local regulations. This includes maintaining updated business licensure and operating in adherence with specific zoning regulations.

Check with your local

equine organizations to learn more about equine regulations and policies in your area.

## **Will I specialize in a specific trade?**

If you're opening a boarding stable or training business, will you specialize in a certain riding style? English riding is dif-

ferent from western riding and will require a completely different approach when it comes to training and grooming.

Consider hiring people from different backgrounds in the industry to offer the most well-rounded line of services possible.





# Equine Industry: By the Numbers

According to a recent study commissioned by the American Horse Council Foundation and conducted by the Barents Group estimates there are 9.2 million horses in America — and counting.

This large number is broken down into horses serving all sorts of purposes, including recreational, commercial, showing, farm work, rodeo, polo and police work.

Let's take a deeper dive into the statistics behind the growing equine industry.

Here is a breakdown of the number of new breed registries, according to a 2014 report by the American Association of Equine Practitioners:

- Quarter Horse:** 263,528
- Paint:** 50,211
- Arabian:** 22,433
- Standardbred:** 17,500
- Appaloosa:** 12,096
- Tennessee Walking:** 5,912
- Miniature Horse:** 5,028
- Morgan Horse:** 6,032
- Pinto:** 7,200
- Saddlebred:** 6,562
- Paso Fino:** 3,264

You might guess that Texas has the largest number of horses compared with other states in America. Did you know that California and Florida fill out



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the top three, respectively? Here is the top 10, according to the AAEP:

- Texas:** 1 million
- California:** 700,000
- Florida:** 500,000
- Oklahoma:** 326,000
- Kentucky:** 320,000

- Ohio:** 307,000
- Missouri:** 281,000
- North Carolina:** 256,000
- Colorado:** 256,000
- Pennsylvania:** 256,000

## HORSE OWNERSHIP

Of the approximate 2 million

horse owners in the United States, here is how the AAEP distinguishes them into categories:

- Recreational rider:** 85 percent
- Competitive rider:** 30 percent

**Horse breeding:** 11 percent  
**Horse facility manager:** 10 percent

- Grooming and exercising:** 9 percent
- Professional trainers:** 7 percent
- Racehorse owner:** 2 percent