

Greasy Heel in Horses

(Mud Fever)(Scratch)(Seborrhea)(Cracked heels)

Its a common condition that affects horses living or working in wet, muddy conditions.

The skin over the pasterns and heels becomes infected, resulting in scabby or weeping lesions which can be very painful.

The condition is a type of dermatitis start as seborrhea and greasiness of pastern skin due to increase hair growth followed by bacterial infection and inflammation, ulceration and crusting.

Etiology

There are numerous causes, most commonly

1- Exposure to wet or muddy areas, such as coastal regions or housing in stables for extended periods of time.

2-Solar exposure – sun burn.

3-Can be infectious (bacterial *Staphylococcus* or *Dermatophilus* *Dermatophilus congolensis* or fungal *Dermatophytes* similar to ringworm (*Trichophyton equineum*) or non-infectious(mites or allergic)

4-Quite often chemical or physical irritants are involved.

5-Contact allergies to grass or other plants.

6-Mange is more common in certain breeds eg, Draft horses.

7-Excessaive hair growth in pastern area .

8- Heel Mites (Chorioptic mange)

Clinical findings ...

1-Dermatitis of the lower limbs – hind limbs more often affected.

Unpigmented (white) skin which becomes red, oedematous (swollen), itchy and painful.

2-The lesions start as a mild scab which continues to thicken with a moist surface underneath.

3-In severe cases the scabs crack and cause pain which may result in lameness as the pastern flexes e.g. with exercise.

4-The lesions normally start at the back of the leg on the heels and progress up the pastern and around towards the front of the leg and can be seen on one to all four legs.



Treatment

1-Clip hair

2-Clean area with warm water to remove excess dirt and greasy material

3-Remove crusty lesions by gently scrubbing with soft brush using antimicrobial agent e.g. chlorhexidine

4-Rinse with clean water.

5-Pat dry with towel and apply prescribed astringent lotion, e.g. white lotionmRepeat daily for 7-10

6-In severe cases other medications such as antibiotics and anti-inflammatories may be required in conjunction with topical ointments

