



# A GUIDE TO: APPLYING FOOT POULTICES

## WHY USE A POULTICE

The most common reason for very severe lameness in horses is a solar abscess or “pus in the foot”. This is most common after wet weather when the bottom of the foot becomes softer and more likely to be hurt. It is important to get your vet to examine any lame horse even if you suspect that pus in the foot is the problem as they will be able to rule out other possible causes of lameness, provide some pain relief and potentially help the pus to drain.

The aim of foot poultices is to soften the bottom of the foot again so that any infection will follow the easiest direction for escape and break out through the bottom of the hoof instead of tracking upwards where it can be more problematic.

## WHAT YOU NEED

You will need the following things to apply a foot poultice:

- A Dressing: Animal Intex is designed for use in hoof abscesses. You can also use veterinary gamgee
- A cushioning layer: A material like softband or orthoband can be useful and easier to apply than cotton wool.
- A nappy is easy to apply over these layers and can hold everything together
- A Holding layer such as Vetwrap
- Grey “Duck” tape: create a square of this to apply to the bottom of the foot by sticking strips of tape together, apply the strips in different directions to make a thicker square of tape. This will make your poultice more waterproof and longer lasting
- Adhesive bandage- like e-band

## HOW TO APPLY

1. Clean the hoof if this has not already been done. Use water to ensure you can see any black marks on the sole of the foot.
2. Cover your dressing in hot water and allow it to cool until it is comfortable for you to hold before applying it to the foot. The dressing can be applied dry once discharge starts to come out of the foot.
3. Use the cushioning layer to hold the dressing onto the foot. A figure of eight pattern around the foot can allow you to cover the whole hoof more easily. Not much cushioning is required but make sure you cover the coronary band (top of the hoof) and the heels.
4. Pull a nappy over these layers
5. Apply vet wrap over the top, using a figure of 8 pattern as before. Leave an inch of cushioning material at the top of your bandage
6. Stick your tape square to the bottom of your horse's foot
7. Secure the edges of the tape square and the top of the bandage with adhesive bandage



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# A GUIDE TO: **BANDAGING**



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When your horse is injured a bandage may be needed to keep the wound clean, prevent movement and apply pressure so that the wound can heal more quickly.

Large wounds and any wound over the knee, hock or fetlock should be checked by your vet.

It is a good idea to make sure you have appropriate bandaging kit in your horse first aid kit at all times. You will need:

- **Dressings** – Melonin dressings are the most commonly used, these stop the wound sticking to the bandage material and absorb any discharge
- **Cushioning layer:** Cotton wool, or a thin cotton wool like material such as Softband/ Orthoband
- **Pressure layer:** Knitted bandage material such as knitfirm
- **Holding layer:** Vetwrap, be careful never to apply this layer to bare skin or to apply it too tightly as it can become very tight.
- **Adhesive plaster** such as eband can be useful to keep your bandage in place and stop shavings being caught in the top and bottom

## WHEN TO USE A BANDAGE:

If you notice a small wound on your horse the best course of action is to wash it thoroughly using either cooled boiled water or water from a hosepipe for at least 10 minutes. Allow the leg to dry and do not apply any wound powders or creams.

1. Check the wound carefully with clean hands and gloves to see how deep the wound is, if you feel the wound is deep or you notice any pus or straw-coloured sticky fluid it is best to contact your vet to examine the wound. If your horse is very distressed by you examining the wound it is best to contact your vet so they can sedate them to assess and bandage the wound.
2. Wearing gloves hold the dressing over the wound. Working from just below the nearest joint above the wound wrap your cushioning layer around the leg so that each time you go round you overlap your cushioning material. When you reach just above the nearest joint below your wound work the cushioning layer back up the leg again. This layer does not need to be tight but you may want a few layers of material to protect the wound
3. In the same way as you applied your cushioning layer apply your pressure layer, this layer should be tight in order to stop the bandage from slipping but you should still be able to fit your fingers in between the top of your bandage and your horse's skin.
4. Finally apply your holding layer over the top of your other layers leaving an inch of the other layers showing at the top and bottom of your bandage. You can cover these bits with e-band to stick the bandage to your horse.

Applying bandages to wounds over joints can be a bit more difficult. And wounds in these areas should be checked by your vet to ensure they don't communicate with the joint.

1. **For Knees:** try to make a figure of 8 pattern with your bandaging material over the knee. Feel at the back of the knee near the top on the outside for a bone which sticks out a little. Bandages can rub on this area easily so when you have finished bandaging cut a little hole over this area to stop too much pressure.
2. **For Hocks:** Use a figure of 8 to cover the top and bottom of the hock joint but leaving the point of the hock unbandaged.
3. Bandages need to be changed every 2-3 days, if they slip or if they become soiled. Most wounds only require a bandage until the dressings are coming off clean.

**IF IN DOUBT CALL US ON 01584 841 080**