

PREPAREDNESS FOR THE TRAIL

Many horse owners enjoy trail riding, whether it be short rides near home or cross-country rides taking days to weeks. In either situation, it is important to anticipate and be prepared for accidents and injuries on the trail. It is important to carry a cell phone and contact numbers for someone you can call in an emergency situation. When riding near your home, you should carry your veterinarian's phone number. When traveling far away, you should locate a veterinarian in advance and have that number on hand in case an emergency situation arises.

Although there are endless problems that could occur on the trail, there are common injuries and essential supplies that are beneficial to carry with you or at least have at the trailer that could be easily accessed. Some situations you can handle on your own and others you will want the assistance of a veterinarian.

It is essential to carry bandage material in case of a laceration. These wounds typically occur on the limb, and basic bandage material includes: sterile gauze, cotton or quilt padding, and vet wrap. With appropriate bandage material, you can apply pressure to decrease the bleeding and protect the wound from the environment until you are able to get help from a veterinarian. In cases of abrasions, which do not penetrate the full thickness of the skin, it is useful to have an antiseptic such as betadine solution to clean the area and a water-soluble dressing such as nitrofurazone or nolvasan ointment to apply to the wound.

Another important supply to have available is banamine. Banamine is useful in cases of colic. It provides comfort in cases of mild colic and can bide some time while trying to locate a veterinarian. Banamine is also useful in situations of an inflammatory process, such as insect bites or allergic reactions. You should always contact your veterinarian prior to administering Banamine and only administer it at your veterinarian's request.

A loose or pulled shoe is a problem that could easily occur on the trail. If someone has the skill to use a shoe puller, it is beneficial to have one available. If a shoe comes off, a temporary solution is application of an easy boot or similar device until you are able to contact your farrier.

One of the most frightening injuries would be a fractured leg. Of course, the best action to take is keeping the horse quiet and calm while calling your veterinarian. However, if this is not an immediate option, there are steps you can take to be prepared. A board or half piece of PVC pipe can be applied to the injured limb. A heavy bandage of cotton and gauze can be applied to the leg, followed by a splint. The splint should extend from the hoof to an area above the fracture site. The splint should be taped securely in place for transportation to the veterinarian. Your veterinarian should always be consulted prior to applying a splint as some splints can cause more damage than they do good.

In any instance, it is best to locate your veterinarian and keep your horse quiet and calm. If you are in a situation in which this can not be done, being prepared with a few supplies can help make a devastating situation better. Supplies such as a flash light, bandage material, easy boot/ temporary shoeing device, shoe pullers, antiseptic, nitrofurazone/ nolvasan ointment, a splint, Banamine, tape, and scissors can be useful for many crisis situations.