



What should go in your horsey first aid kit?

Ahh horses. Majestic, mighty, magnificent, and... unbelievably accident prone. Bless them.

You gaze upon them – often on rainy days, when the paddock has turned to mud – and watch with equal parts awe and horror as they perform their most elevated extended trot (breathtaking, but never witnessed inside an actual dressage arena). This is followed up by several powerful farts, then an ears-back, flowy tail flat gallop and a last-second slide-halt to the fence (filthy rug askew, leg straps riding eye-wateringly up their butt). You cross your fingers and gum-booted toes and hope they come out unscathed. And mostly, they do.

But for all the times they don't – or for the multitude of other emergencies that can arise with these magnificent beasts – **you need a plan!**

Because when your horse is sick or injured, the situation is already stressful enough. So, **what can you do to be prepared?**



Know what normal looks (& sounds) like

Attempting new tasks for the first time in an emergency situation can add to the stress. So, it's good to **practice taking your horse's temperature, heart rate, and respiratory rate**. It will also help build up your knowledge bank of what is 'normal'.

Know your horse's vital signs!



Normal Temperature
37.5-38.5°C



Heart rate
30-44 beats per minute



Respiratory rate
8-20 breaths per minute

Love the heck out of your vet

It's worth developing a good working relationship with your vet – yearly vaccination/dental checks are a great way to stay in touch. This is also a great opportunity to **ask questions about your horse's general health and wellbeing**.

Keep a copy of your vet's contact details in your phone and horsey first aid kit AND **have a backup** if your regular vet can't be contacted or can't attend.

Check that your vet does emergency/afterhours calls. Some only provide routine care but not an after-hours service.

Have a transport plan

If your horse is sick but a vet can't get out to your property, **have a plan B for transporting your horse to a clinic**. Plan how you would transport your horse if you don't own a float.

Put together a horsey first aid kit

A well-prepared first aid kit can make a big difference in an emergency. By having an organised, up-to-date kit on hand, you can **respond quickly** and provide necessary care until professional help arrives.

What follows is a list of must-have items for your first aid kit. Make sure you **regularly check expiry dates** and **replace items as you use them** to keep your kit up to date. It's also good practice to keep a clean, 'first aid only' bucket that can be sterilised for wound cleaning.

Our top 20 First Aid Kit essentials

1. Notebook & Pen

Keeping a record of your horse's vital signs, injury details and medication schedules **will allow for accurate tracking** and communication with your vet.

2. Torch/Headlamp & Batteries

Essential for **safely assessing injuries or wounds at night or in low-light** conditions. Keep some spare batteries with your kit for easy replacement during an emergency.

3. Digital Thermometer

Measuring your horse's temperature is a critical tool in your first aid kit, as a **high temperature** is often the **first sign of a health issue**. A thermometer will also allow you to track your horse's progress when recovering from illness, injury or surgery.

4. Stethoscope

A stethoscope allows you to **monitor** your horse's **heart rate, respiratory rate** and **gut sounds**.

5. Scissors

Curved, blunt-end scissors are best for reducing accidental injury when cutting bandages or tape.

6. Hoof Pick

A hoof pick is an important tool for **removing debris from the horse's hoof** that can cause injury or infection.



Did you know?

The "toilet flush" sound in your horse's abdomen is a valuable indicator of digestive health? The rumblings and gurgles are normal in healthy horses and suggest normal motility (ie. movement of food through the GI tract). Cause for concern arises when these noises are lessened, completely absent, or when they are greatly increased.

To listen, place your stethoscope on the upper right quadrant of the horse's flank. This is where the caecum (a large fermentation sack) is based. The 'flushing' sound occurs when the caecum empties, which should be every 1 to 2 minutes in normal horses.



7. Wire Cutters / Pliers

For **removal of wire or other entanglements** if your horse gets caught in a fence.

8. Disposable Gloves

Disposable gloves provide a **hygienic barrier** during **wound care**, which reduces the risk of contamination and protects both your horse and you.

9. Antiseptic Solution (eg. Iodine or Chlorhexidine)

Essential for **initial wound cleaning** to reduce the risk of infection from bacteria and fungi.

10. Antiseptic Ointment (eg. QuikHEAL, White Healer, Filta-Bac)

For the treatment of **wounds, abrasions** and **other skin conditions**. Ointments may help to reduce the risk of infection and shield the wound from environmental contaminants.

11. Cotton Wool Roll

Provides **cushioned padding and support** for areas like the fetlock, hock and tendons. It can also be used for **wound dressing** by providing protective padding underneath cohesive or adhesive bandages.

12. Gauze Swabs

Absorbent woven fabric squares that can be used to **clean wounds, absorb fluids** or **apply topical antiseptic** treatments.

13. Poultice Dressing

An **absorbent, medicated dressing** used to treat infected **open wounds, abscesses, cracked heels, puncture wounds, seedy toe, splints, sore shins and other inflammatory conditions**. It can be applied wet (hot or cold) or dry depending on the condition treated. Hot is best for drawing out abscesses, cold is ideal to reduce swelling, and dry is great as an antiseptic dressing.

14. Cohesive Bandages (eg. Vet Wrap)

A cohesive bandage sticks to itself but not to hair, skin or other surfaces. It is elastic and provides light compression, making it ideal **for securing dressings** and **supporting injuries** without causing discomfort or pulling on the horse's coat.

15. Adhesive Bandages (eg. Elastoplast)

Contains an adhesive layer that sticks to skin, hair or underlying materials. Adhesive bandages **provide stronger support and stability**, making them suitable for robust applications where a secure hold is required.

16. Duct Tape

Reinforces hoof bandages or **secures protective layers**.

17. Large Syringes

For **flushing wounds** to remove debris and bacteria or for **administering oral medications**.

18. Saline Solution

Used to **gently clean wounds, flush out debris and reduce the risk of infection**. Its sterile and non-irritating properties make it ideal for sensitive areas such as the eyes.

19. Nappies

Nappies make the best foot bandages! They are super absorbent and provide padding for hoof injuries. Ideal for treating abscesses or protecting wounds on the hoof.

20. Tweezers

To help you **remove foreign objects**.

Naturally, **our enduring wish is that your horse enjoys a long life, free of illness and injury**. But, you never know what might happen, so it's always a good idea to be prepared.

Hopefully the steps outlined above can help you do just that!

Got questions? We'd love to help!
Give us a call on 1800 029 901 (Aus) or 0800 650 505 (NZ).



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