

Treating Critical Injuries Before the Vet Arrives

Severe lacerations with bleeding:

- Using a clean dressing, apply pressure with your hand directly over the source of bleeding.
- Gently clean the wound with a cold water hose only if it is severely contaminated by dirt and other debris.
- Do not apply any medication, disinfectant or ointments to any wound that may require suturing because these may cause tissue damage that can interfere with the suturing procedure. As a general rule, the less done to the wound before presentation to the veterinarian for suturing the better.

If the horse will be transported to a veterinary clinic or if there will be a delay before the veterinarian arrives, apply a clean pressure bandage directly over the wound. Use plenty of padding between the injury and the bandaging material. Vet-wrap should be applied firmly enough to lessen bleeding but not so firmly as to cut off circulation. Always leave some of the padding material showing at the top and bottom of your wrap. Tourniquets are not recommended for use by untrained personnel.

Limb fractures or injuries with instability:

- Stabilize the injured limb in the first few minutes following the occurrence of a severe orthopedic injury. This will prevent further injury to the affected limb and its blood supply and will reduce the pain experienced by the animal.
- If a commercially designed splint is not available, you can make one with a pillow and several rolls of Vet-wrap type bandages. Wrap the pillow around the leg and apply the tape pulling the pillow as tight as you can while wrapping. After several rolls of tape have been applied, the bandage will become very stiff, thereby stabilizing the leg. This is only a short-term solution which will need to be replaced with more permanent stabilization as soon as possible.

When using tranquilizers in a severely injured horse, use a very low dose. These animals easily fall into shock and higher doses of tranquilizers can compound low blood pressure complications.

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