

Pastern Dermatitis

Pastern Dermatitis is known by many names. You may hear it called “**scratches, mud fever, dew poisoning, or greasy heel**”. It is inflammation +/- local infection of the skin on/near the back of the pasterns or ankles, most typically of the hindlimbs, but can affect the forelimbs and other areas of the lower limbs as well.

Causes:

- Micro/trauma to the skin
- Bacteria (usually secondary)
- Fungi
- External parasites (Chorioptes mites)
- Contact Allergies
- Immune Mediated Disease
- Photosensitization

Predisposing/Risk Factors:

- Feathered legs
- Heavy/draft breeds
- Wet/moist conditions
- Non-pigmented/white skin

Signs/Symptoms:

- Scaling/crusting
- Redness
- Hair loss
- Swelling/edema
- Oozing/greasiness
- Variable pain
- Variable itching
- Thickened skin



Figure 1: Before Clipping and Cleaning



Figure 2: After Clipping and Cleaning

**** If not addressed pastern dermatitis can cause secondary cellulitis, lymphangitis, and even chronic progressive lymphedema (CPL).**

Treatment:

- **Clipping:** This is highly recommended to help prevent the hair from holding dirt/moisture and attracting mites, especially if your horse has feathers. This also allows topical medications better contact with the affected areas.
- **Medicated shampoos (weather permitting):** We recommend shampooing your horses affected limb(s) 3-4 times per week initially, then decrease to once or twice a week, letting the shampoo sit on the leg(s) for 10 mins. We generally recommend a shampoo such as **Equisheild CK or Equisheild CK HC**. Betadine or other Iodine based scrubs/shampoos may cause irritation of the inflamed skin in some horses. If mites are suspected to be the underlying cause we recommend using a lime sulfur dip as well to help kill any external parasites.
- **Topical ointments:** After cleaning the affected areas we recommend applying a topical antimicrobial such as **Equisheild CK salve, Equisheild CK HC salve, SSD ointment, Desitin Cream**. Some over the counter topicals may cause worsened inflammation/irritation of the skin. If mites are suspected we may also recommend a topical fipronil or permethrin product.
 - You can purchase the shampoo and/or ointments from our online pharmacy at <https://www.miamitownequine.com/shop-online-store>.
- **Keep the limb as clean/dry as possible:** Moisture can cause/exacerbate dermatitis. Wait to turn your horse out until the morning dew dries. Dry their limbs once inside for the day/night. Keep their stall as clean and dry as possible. Using a physical barrier can help as well. We recommend Silver Whinnys horse socks (<https://soxforhorses.com/silver-whinnys/>) when out in the pasture. If your horse is experiencing a severe episode we may recommend a compression bandage/wrap for several days.

*** If your horse does not respond to topical treatment after 10-14 days we recommend an appointment/recheck exam for evaluation. Additional diagnostics such as a skin scraping, culture, or biopsy may be necessary in long standing and refractory cases.***

Additional Recommendations:
