



SUMMER SORES / HABRONEMAS



These non-healing wounds are often known as “Summer sores” but the proper name for the disease is Habronemiasis.

Habronemiasis is a relatively common condition seen during the summer months caused by nematode (worm) infestation of the skin and typically manifests as granulomatous erosions and/or masses. The most commonly affected sites include the eyelids and conjunctiva around the eyes, legs, penis, preputial sheath and any open skin wounds.

How do horses get infected?

Summer sores result from a small wound/scratch or mucocutaneous junction (tissues around the eyes or lips) that become infected by larvae of the equine stomach worm (*Habronema muscae*) carried in the mouthparts of flies, deposited during feeding activities



The common house and stable flies are intermediate hosts for these parasites, meaning that they ingest and harbor the immature larval stages and then deposit them into the skin while biting. The larvae are occasionally deposited around the muzzle, thereby facilitating ingestion by the horse. Adult stages of the nematode live in the stomach and produce larvae which are subsequently passed in manure. The life cycle is repeated when the larvae in the manure are ingested

by maggots (immature flies).



How is it diagnosed?

A presumptive diagnosis is usually made on clinical appearance and behaviour of the lesions. A Biopsy would be needed to definitively diagnose the disease.

How is it treated?

There are 4 strategies for treating habronemas and in many cases all of these treatment modalities are used at the same time;

1. Ivermectin/moxidectin oral de-wormer 2 doses 14 days apart;
2. Topical corticosteroid treatment;
3. Fly control and
4. Topical wound care to prevent re-infestation.

More extensive lesions may require surgical intervention.

Prevention

- Larvae in the summer sore lesions, as well as adult worms in the stomach, can be controlled with a worming paste or liquid such as Equimax, Equest, Ammo or MecWorma, administered at regular worming intervals of 6 to 8 weeks during the high-risk period. Consult your vet for advice on a worming program
- Keep wounds clean and dry to promote healing and make them less attractive to flies
- Apply fly repellant wounds creams/sprays eg septicide / cetrigen spray around healing wounds each morning to reduce fly worry and risk of summer sores
- Stable and yard hygiene is essential to reduce fly breeding. Environmental insect repellants are available that can be sprayed in stable areas.
- Fly veils fitted during daylight for paddocked horses to reduce incidence of lesions around the eyes.