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Horses and Sunburn

As humans we are aware of the danger of staying in the sun too long. We know that if we spend too much time out in the sun we run the risk of turning a nice tan into an ugly sunburn. In addition to being unattractive and painful we are also aware that sunburns can lead to skin cancer. We use all sorts of tricks from sunscreen to light weight covers to prevent our skin from frying.

Because they are big and appear to be infallible (a trait that every horse owner knows is an illusion) we often forget about the effect that the sun has on our horses.

Horses, just like people, can sunburn. Sunburn is most frequently seen on horses with a light colored hair coat such as Appaloosa's, Lipizzans, Paints, Pintos, Andalusian, and grays. Horse owners who own horses with white noses and a lot of pale skin around the eyes often find themselves treating their equine partners for sunburn. A sudden change in hormones, like horses that have been bred, can cause a horse to develop sunburn. Although dark horses aren't typically irritated by sunburn the sun often bleaches the dark hair. In some cases severe sunburn is believed to lead to some liver damage.

Horse owners should also be aware that some medications can also trigger sunburn in horses. Tetracycline is one medication that has been known to cause sunburn in some horses.

Equine sunburn looks just like human sunburn. The skin turns an angry shade of pink or a violent red. If the skin is left untreated long enough it starts to chap and crack. Horses that are suffering from severe sunburn will start to blister. Sunburn can cause hair loss.

Treating sunburned eyes is fairly simple. All an owner needs to do is purchase a fly mask for their horse. When using a fly mask it is extremely important to make sure that the fly mask is kept clean. Simply use a hose and a sprayer to rinse the dirt and eye gunk from the mask. After rinsing the fly mask hang it in the sun to dry.

Some fly masks have an extension that protects the end of the nose from getting sunburned. If you do not own a fly mask that covers your horse's nose all you need to do is rub your horse's nose with sunscreen that you can purchase at your local drugstore.

Some horse owners, especially ones who are interested in showing, try to prevent the sun from damaging their horse's coat by keeping them inside during the day time hours when the sun is the most damaging. Other owners prefer to keep their horses covered with a light weight turnout blanket or fly sheet to protect their horse's hair coat. One of the reasons some owners prefer a blanketed horse to one kept inside is that they feel that keeping a horse stalled and completely free of sunlight can lead to depression.

You can also find this article published on [Horses and Sunburn](#), and on the tag pages [Andalusian Horse](#), [Appaloosa](#), [Cause Hair Loss](#), [Colored Hair](#), [Dark Horses](#), [Equine Partners](#), [Eye Gunk](#), [Fly Mask](#), [Fly Masks](#), [Hair Coat](#), [Horse Owner](#), [Horse Owners](#), [Lipizzans](#), [Liver Damage](#), [Pale Skin](#), [Severe Sunburn](#), [Skin Cancer](#), [Sunburn](#), [Sunburned Eyes](#), [Violent Red](#).