

C.Jarvis Insurance Agency INC.

AUGUST 2003 NEWS-PAGE 2

Other skin diseases that can cause itching include:

- *Hives (recurrent urticaria);
- *Parasites (onchocerciasis);
- *Ringworm (dermatophytosis);
- *Contact dermatitis.

Recurrent urticaria can be recognized by the sudden appearance of wheals in the skin, some of which might coalesce, or grow together. The skin lesions are a response to allergens that could be inhaled, ingested, or contacted in the environment. The wheals might disappear quickly only to recur, or they might remain over several days.

Recognizing the allergen is done by IDST or by trial and error. This involves exposing the horse to different allergens individually, which is a tedious process but yields a more specific answer.

Onchocerciasis is hypersensitivity to the larval stage of a parasite that can live in the horse's skin. Transmitted to the horse by Culicoides, these parasites are effectively controlled by the dewormers ivermectin and moxidectin. Therefore, hypersensitivity to them is much less common today than in the past.

Ringworm is characterized by circular, patchy, or coalescing lesions of hair loss--is another skin disease that can cause itching. Contrary to popular belief, the organism that causes ringworm is not a worm but a skin fungus, or dermatophyte. A diagnosis of ringworm can be confirmed by culturing hairs plucked from the edge of a lesion.

Many horses with allergic skin disease can develop contact hypersensitivity to medications or insect repellents used to treat the disease, making the original lesions worse. For that reason, your veterinarian might request that you stop treatment with all topical compounds and shampoos (except for one or two) while preliminary diagnostic work is performed.

Finally, horses kept in hot, humid areas can develop dermatophilosis. This disease, also called rain scald or rain rot, is caused by bacteria and often is mistaken for a fungal disease. The bacteria live in the outer layer of skin and cause from pinpoint to large, crusty scabs. When removed, the base of the hairs can be seen sticking through the bottom of the scab. In early or less severe

cases of this disease, simply removing the scabs with shampoos and currying will take care of the problem. More severe cases in which the infection has affected deeper layers of the skin might require antibiotics.

Your veterinarian should be an active partner in diagnosing and treating skin disease, especially one that does not resolve in one to two weeks. By carefully examining your horse and following the progression of the skin lesions, you can help your veterinarian choose a place to perform a skin biopsy--the best diagnostic plan for troublesome or persistent skin disease. Once a diagnosis is made, specific therapy can be recommended to resolve the condition.

C. Jarvis Insurance Agency
33755 Station Street
Solon, Ohio 44139 USA

tel: 440.248.5330
fax: 440.248.8737

info@jarvisinsurance.com
www.jarvisinsurance.com

Newsletter design and production
by Big Fat Horse.com