

Bandaging the Equine Limb

Unfortunately horses can be pretty good at injuring themselves, often needing a limb bandage.

Bandages are great for providing an environment which supports wound healing, as well as protection for the wound from contamination and flies, absorption of wound discharge, and reduction of limb swelling and limb movement. Bandaged wounds often heal faster than non-bandaged, but only if there is a healthy, clean wound under the wrapping.

When applied incorrectly, bandages can do more harm than good. Slipped bandages, uneven pressure, too little padding, starting and finishing too high or low, and wet or soiled bandages are some of the problems we see.



A well healing wound with an even, flat bed of granulation tissue



First layer



Second layer



Third layer - see how the top and the bottom stay uncovered



Fixation of the bandage to the skin, starting at the bottom

How to Wrap the Perfect Bandage:

First layer: e.g. gauze swabs or Melolin dressing. Dependent on the type of wound, we choose between adherent or non-adherent and absorbent or non-absorbent dressings.

Second layer: For this layer, use combine dressing. It should be wrapped at least 2 to 3 layers thick, to protect the wound against further trauma and prevent excessive movement.

Third layer: Use a crepe bandage to hold the previous layers in place and prevent sliding of the bandage. It is important there is even pressure in this layer. The bottom and top ends of the combine dressing are left uncovered by the crepe bandage to avoid creating pressure points.

Final layer: Cover the entire bandage with Elastoplast, including the skin at the bottom and top of the bandage. Start at the skin at the bottom of the bandage, and continue overlapping the bandage until the skin at the top of the bandage is covered. This prevents shavings or dirt entering between the skin and bandage, and keeps the bandage layers in place.

General Principles when Applying a Bandage:

- Wrap each layer in the same direction, and overlap each layer by about one third to half width each round. This gives the bandage more stability.
- Uneven pressure can cause rubbing under the bandage. Always follow the normal structures of the limb, and make sure the thickness of your bandage does not vary.
- Never finish a bandage midway between joints, as this may cause pressure on the underlying tissues.
- Make sure your horse doesn't move around too much when the bandage is on, because it can slip and cause pressure.
- A slipping bandage disrupts the cells trying to heal across the wound.
- If you're not sure about your bandage, don't hesitate to ask us for advice.



Final adhesive layer