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Equine Mites

Mites typically affect the legs of our feathered breeds. Mites can also affect other breeds and one of the more common areas affected in non-feathered breeds is the facial area.

Mite infections can occur throughout the year but as mite populations are highest in Winter, this is the time of year we see the most clinical cases.

Affected horses display signs of itchiness and those with leg mites frequently and repeatedly stamp their feet, bite/chew at their feathers and scratch on various objects to name but a few. On closer examination, crusts & hair loss, with/without weeping lesions are generally present. Some horses markedly object to examination of the lesions so care should be exercised when attempting to examine.

Diagnosis is confirmed by examining a skin brushing under the microscope but frequently diagnosis is based on a compatible history and physical examination findings.

Treatment should ideally start with clipping; however, most owners do not want to proceed down this route in the first instance but in the case of treatment failure, clipping is highly recommended. The limbs should then be bathed in a solution to try soften/break up scabs/crusts prior to the application of a topical treatment.

There are many topical treatments on the market indicating the lack of a gold standard treatment and the fact that different horses respond differently to different treatments; what may work in one patient may not work in another. An injectable treatment is also available. The is a frequently utilised treatment option but it's use is off-licence in horses.

Following treatment, your horse's stable should be thoroughly cleaned out to prevent re-infection.