



## **Ballybrown Equine Clinic**



Ballybrown Equine Clinic, Ballybrown, Clarina, Co. Limerick, Ireland.

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## **APPLYING HOCK BANDAGES**

A horse uses its hocks in nearly everything that it does-from stopping and standing to walking and galloping. Constant use and a prominently exposed point make hocks vulnerable to stress, fatigue and traumatic injury. Your vet may recommend a hock bandage for any number of situations such as:

- Following surgery.
- Provide joint support in weak foals.
- Reduce swelling in a strained joint.
- Reduce motion of the joint.
- Protect a wound or surgical site from contamination.
- Aid the healing of a wound.
- Absorb fluids.

### **THE CHALLENGE.**

Applying a hock bandage is not without its challenges. Because of the sharp motion of the joint, it requires special techniques to make a hock bandage safe, secure and effective.

Horses also tend to react more to a hock bandage than a lower leg bandage, and may be inclined to kick, fight or fidget. Stay alert and be prepared to move out of harms way if the horse acts this way to the hock bandage.

As with any type of bandage, a hock bandage can be hazardous if applied incorrectly. There is always the risk of injury to circulation, and to the tendons and ligaments if the layers are not applied smoothly evenly and with the right amount of tension.

If you have never bandaged a horse's leg before ask your vet to demonstrate the proper techniques. Practice under their supervision before doing it on your own.

### **BANDAGE MATERIAL**

Because of the bandage's location, you will need materials that readily conform to the shape of the hock and permit movement without slipping or loosening. If the bandage is to cover the wound and should be sterile, you will need:

- Sterile dressing to cover the wound. (melolin)
- Cotton wool.
- Support fabric.(mollelast)
- Vet wrap
- Elastoplast

### **HOCK BANDAGING GUIDELINES**

1. Cover the wound with sterile dressing.
2. Surround the hock with soft absorbent padding such as cotton wool (two inches thick).Padding should extend 4-6 inches above and below the point of the hock and lie flat and wrinkle free against the skin.

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3. Begin wrapping with support fabric well below the point of the hock (approximately one inch above the edge of the padding).
4. Wrap front to back. Outside to inside, spiraling upward (clockwise in right legs, anti clockwise in left legs.) Exert just enough pull to stretch the fabric to half its extended length.
5. Overlap each preceding layer by 50 % using smooth uniform tension to compress the padding without forming lumps or ridges beneath the bandage.
6. Begin a figure of eight just below the point of the hock by extending the bandage from inside the leg below the point of the hock. Continue to wrap around the back of the leg and then extend it downwards inside to outside.
7. Repeat this figure 8 pattern working up until the bandage extends 4-6inches above the point of the hock, covering the padding to one inch of the edge.
8. Depending on the location of the injury, your vet will advise you whether or not to cover the point of the hock with a support layer.
9. When bandaging, use enough pressure to minimize swelling and keep the bandage in place, but never wrap so tightly that you cannot easily slip a finger between the top of the bandage and the tendon that runs up the back of the leg above the point of the hock.
10. Do not wrap too loosely as the bandage may slip or fail to do its job.
11. Secure the bandage at the top and bottom with an adhesive tape such as Elastoplast.
12. If you have problems with the hock bandage slipping, begin by wrapping the lower leg from the coronet band several inches below the hock. This provides a foundation for the hock bandage and will keep it in place.

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

If a hock bandage is required, do not be disappointed if your initial efforts are less than satisfactory. Even under the best of circumstances, the hock is difficult to secure in a bandage.

A horse with a condition requiring a hock bandage should be confined to a stable unless otherwise directed by your vet.

Check the bandage several times a day to make sure it is in place.

Make sure it does not cut off the circulation, pinch the tendon at the back of the leg, create pressure sores, or cause discomfort.

Monitor and evaluate the horse carefully. If swelling develops above the bandage or at the point of the hock, or lameness increases, contact your vet.

Change the bandage at least every 2-3 days, or immediately if it becomes wet or soiled.

If you have any further concerns about hock bandaging techniques contact us at Ballybrown Equine Clinic.