

## Mites

'Feather mites' are a common occurrence in feathered horses but can also occur in short haired horses. The mite involved is the 'Chorioptes' mite, a surface mite which infests the hair and skin.



Heavily feathered horses such as in this photo (left) are more likely to suffer from mite infestation.

Clipping the feathers as shown (right) makes treatment significantly easier

## How do I know if my horse is affected?

Horses with mite infestations often stamp and itch their lower limbs, and if chronically affected, can have thickened skin and sores, leaving the horse prone to developing secondary bacterial infections. Mites cannot be seen with the naked eye and can be diagnosed on microscopic examination of skin scrapes. However, the clinical picture is often sufficient to make a diagnosis and warrant treatment without the use of skin scrapes.

## What treatments are available?

There are no licensed treatments for mites in horses. However, the commonly used treatment is Dectomax, an injectable drug licensed for use in cattle. Two treatments are given 10-14 days apart. Additional measures are recommended to improve the effectiveness of treatment, such as clipping the feathers and replacing all bedding to remove mites living within the horses' environment. Other treatments include oral ivermectin, frontline spray, and sulphur shampoos.

## Lice

Lice infestation, or 'pediculosis' is a common occurrence especially during the winter months when horses have a thick coat. Lice are external parasites that feed from blood (sucking lice) or from the skin (chewing lice) and are species-specific, meaning that equine lice do not infest other species such as ourselves.



Adult louse attached to hair

## How do I know if my horse is affected?

Lice infestations cause severe pruritus (itchiness), and often the coat has a 'dandruff' appearance. Adult lice (1-2mm long) can be seen with the naked eye, and can usually be seen at the base of the mane. Eggs (nits) can also be seen as tiny white spheres attached to hairs.

## What treatments are available?

There are many products available for use in louse infestations with varying efficacy. We find Deosect (a permethrin product) to be the most effective. Spraying or washing the horse in correctly diluted Deosect will kill adult lice. At least one repeat treatment needs to be given at 10-14 days to ensure any larvae, which have hatched during this time, are also killed. Any in-contact horses should also be treated with Deosect, and rugs washed or treated with Deosect spray