

Vitfoss newsletter

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Mud fever can be controlled and cured by a new approach that compromises the conventional treatments, including antibiotics.

After a six-month period as a Master Thesis supervisor for two newly graduated veterinarians, DVM., Ph.D. Rikke Buhl from Copenhagen University believes that we need to set up new treatment approaches to the commonly found skin disorder in horses often called “mud fever” or the clinical name pastern dermatitis. A newly published Veterinarian Master Thesis proves that Stalosan Ointment meets the demands for this new approach.



“Pastern dermatitis is one of the most common skin diseases in horses and one of the most frustrating to treat. Usually horse owners treat pastern dermatitis with a variety of ointments and pastes with variable results. When these treatments fail a veterinarian often first is consulted and presented with a late stage of disease, complicating the diagnostic work. When the veterinarians find the true cause of the disease, it still can be challenging to find an effective treatment strategy. That is why there is a need for new effective treatments as well as documentation for the effect of those already existing. The different causative agents of pastern dermatitis give a similar cutaneous reaction pattern, making it impossible to know the exact reason without further testing. However, it is often not possible to determine the causative agent even after further testing” (citation from the Veterinarian Master Thesis of DVM Gitte Baunbæk and DVM Jennie Hed, 2009).

Mud fever can affect horses of all breeds and ages, although draft horses and horses with white legs often are more affected. Various bacteria, fungi, mites or sensitivity to sunlight can induce the disease. The latter is particularly seen in horses with white legs and can be induced by certain plants including St. John’s wort, buckwheat, perennials, parsley and Bishop’s weed or liver disease. It is difficult to identify the cause of a mud fever attack and therefore many therapies are ineffective due to improper treatment strategy in relation to the causative agent. For example, antibiotics have no effect on mud fever if the cause is ringworm (fungus) or mites.

A recently completed Master Thesis at Copenhagen University shows that Stalosan Ointment is even more effective in treating mud fever as daily chlorhexidine wash followed by a mud fever ointment consisting of antibiotics, zinc oxide and salicylic acid – the product of choice at Copenhagen University. In this Master Thesis 93% of the horses treated with Stalosan Ointment achieved a significant reduction of their mud fever attack within a period of 14 days. All included horses have had mud fever on both rear legs from 3 days to 3 years, with an average of 3 months. The causative agent varied between bacteria, fungi, mites and sensitivity to sunlight.

Conclusion from the Master Thesis: *“Stalosan ointment is considered as a convenient and effective choice for treatment of non-severe cases of pastern dermatitis.”*

The Master Thesis has been conducted by: Gitte Maria Frost Baunbæk & Jennie Maria Hed, Department of Large Animal, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, 2009, under the guidance of the leading Danish horse dermatologist, Associate professor DVM., Ph.D. Rikke Buhl.

Efficacy of Stalosan Ointment on mud fever is not depending on the causative agent (bacteria, fungus or mites). In cases of hypersensitivity to sunlight Stalosan ointment could act as a shield against the sun. This makes Stalosan Ointment the choice of treatment for mud fever without an initial veterinarian consultation.