

# Bed Sores Make Life a Nightmare for Equine Owners

Contributing Veterinarian/Chiropractor: Amy Hayek, DVM



(photo courtesy of Click Horse Products)

Many horses suffer from sores on fetlocks, knees, and hocks due to weakened muscles that allow for lying down on rough ground. Also known as pressure ulcers and pressure sores, bed sores can happen when there is friction or unrelieved pressure on these parts of the body. It isn't the surface on which the horse lies down, as pressure sores can occur in a thickly bedded stall. Veterinarian and chiropractor, Amy Hayek adds, "The horse's inability to move well, and inability to rise and lower carefully and evenly, or to turn when needed, is what causes the pressure."

Injuries or poor health can affect the way a horse rises or lies down causing a horse to use knees, hocks, and fetlocks to push up. The results are sores that can develop on the joints because the joints have less tissue protecting them and are more likely to be damaged. Resolving these sores can be extremely difficult.

It is important to heal bed sores so they don't turn into chronic pressure ulcers, repeatedly infected and over time, more difficult to heal.



*Bed sores on the knees fetlocks*

When new skin closes over a bed sore, it is thin and fragile. Little is required for the sore to reopen. As time goes on in the damage/healing cycle, the new skin comes in as fragile as tissue paper and can take a year to thicken and become durable. Even then it is still subject to being damaged again.

Unless a horse can change the behavior in how it rises or lies down, skin tissue will reopen. The only way for this to resolve is for the muscles in the body to become stronger.

“Muscles are weak for three main reasons: lack of oxygen, lack of glucose (food) or decrease in the frequency of firing of the nerve that stimulates it,” says Dr. Hayek. “For most horses the first two are usually not a problem, but the third may go unnoticed for a long time. As horses age, the lack of innervation to the muscles results in the development of an inability to move well. It can lead to difficulty eating or breathing too. Maintaining nerve function is the job of your AVCA certified Animal Chiropractor, but for most horses that suffer chronic bed sores, the joints must remain protected for the remainder of the horse’s life.”\*

Silver Whinnys® can be effective as the bandage that protects these

difficult sores while they resolve, but the socks require the same protection so that the hard ground isn't also tearing open the socks.

Fetlock and hock protectors can protect the sores while the Silver Whinnys® support healing.

There are manufacturers of protection devices for fetlocks. Fewer are available for the hocks that are workable, and far less are made for the knees. Most are made of neoprene and are durable enough to offer protection but retain body heat and cause sweating which exacerbates skin reactions to the neoprene, not an uncommon reaction. During the winter months, neoprene fetlock boots are a great and inexpensive solution to be worn over Silver Whinnys. A winter option for fetlock protection is the [EquiPro Bedsore boots](#).



*EquiPro® Fetlock Boots worn over Silver Whinnys.*

In summer months, neoprene becomes the worst environment for healing. Sores need oxygen and the absence of dirt, moisture, and heat. Silver Whinnys can help in spite of heat, by buffering the skin from the neoprene, but ideally during the warm months, a non-neoprene fetlock protection is a good choice.

The Fetlock Shield® by Click Horse Products is a good warmer weather fetlock protector when worn over Silver Whinnys. Click Horse Products also makes the most workable hock protective gear we've found. We use the Hock Shields® often to add support to our silver bandaging for hocks due to bedsores and injuries. [HockShield.com](http://HockShield.com) They are shortly to release the new Knee Shields tm. Look for their release some time winter of 2018-2019. We have already seen how well they work with our socks in helping knees heal.



*Fetlock Shield® worn with Silver Whinnys®*

Our “Large Bandage Socks” work best with the support and protection added by the Hock Shields when they are used for bed sores on the hocks. They offer your horse the benefit of our high-tech silver bandage combined with ongoing protection from injury while healing.

Once sores heal, you can continue to use the socks beneath Fetlock Shield, Hock Shields®, or Equipro® fetlock bed sore boots for added protection and to help reduce heat buildup and sweat.



*Ultra Hock Shield® worn over the Large Bandage Sock*



*Before and After the Silver Whinnys® and HockShields®*

Every situation is different for horses with bed sores. We assess each circumstance and offer the best bandaging solution. But make no mistake: you must heal the sores first. The Large Bandage Sox used as the wound dressing help you get the job done and will fit even the largest hocks. [Contact us](#) and send photos of the sores so that we can offer you the best bandage solution.

- Sox For Horses! encourages owners to look into chiropractic treatments for their horse with bed sores as chiropractic adjustments can be beneficial for helping to restore a horse's balance in some cases. To find an AVCA certified Animal Chiropractor in your area visit <https://animalchiropracticeducation.com/alumni> or [www.avcadoctors.com](http://www.avcadoctors.com). Contributing Veterinarian/Chiropractor: Amy Hayek, DVM can be found at: [https://animalchiropracticeducation.com/our\\_team/dr-amy-hayek/](https://animalchiropracticeducation.com/our_team/dr-amy-hayek/)

See: [The Four Stages of Healing](#)

More Support Articles at: [Sock Support](#)

"Bandaging Large Joints: Silver Whinnys Large Bandage Socks/article #18"

"Using Silver Whinnys as Bandaging for Large Surface Wounds/article #01"

"Application of Topical Medications/article#02"

"The Challenges of Bandaging#04"

"Keeping the Silver Whinnys® in Place and Protected/article #09"

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