

HEALTHY LAND HEALTHY HORSES SERIES

EYE PROBLEMS

GRASS SEEDS • DUST • FENCING INJURIES • RANK DRY STUBBLE

CORNEAL ULCERS

Corneal ulcers result from damage to the surface of the eyeball. The transparent outer surface of the eye is called the Cornea. It protects the delicate structures within the eye while allowing for vision.

Unlike humans, horses also have a third eyelid, or *nictitating membrane*, which originates from the inside corner and closes horizontally across the eye. The function of the third eyelid is to protect the cornea.

Common causes

- Abrasive impact of sand.
- Penetration of grass seeds from summer pastures and hay.
- Scratches from paddock stubble.
- Injury from poorly designed fences.

It is important to inspect the horse's eyes daily, especially in summer. Early treatment of eye injuries will prevent irreversible damage.

Symptoms

- Squinting
- Redness in the eye
- Swelling
- Excessive tears
- Rubbing of eye on foreleg
- Spasms of the eyelid
- Cloudiness of the eye
- Discharge of pus and eyelids partially closed

What to do

- Place the horse in a stable or shelter, out of direct sunlight.
- Contact your veterinarian.
- Follow the recommended treatment program.

Land Management

- Position ground level feeders in yards, or on good pasture or in stables.
- Minimise exposure to dust and sand by keeping appropriate pasture cover (do not overgraze).
- Check paddock plants and hays for excessive seeds or stalks. Grazing, cutting hay, and slashing in spring will prevent pastures becoming rank and tough. Pastures grazed to 5 cm are quite easily managed.
- Check fencing for protrusions and do not use barbed wire.
- Bare areas in paddocks may need to be resown. Soil testing to determine fertiliser and lime requirements is a key strategy along with good weed control. Perennial grasses such as cocksfoot, phalaris and kikuyu are particularly hard wearing (seek professional advice).



Slashing in spring

Check horses' eyes regularly, especially during summer.

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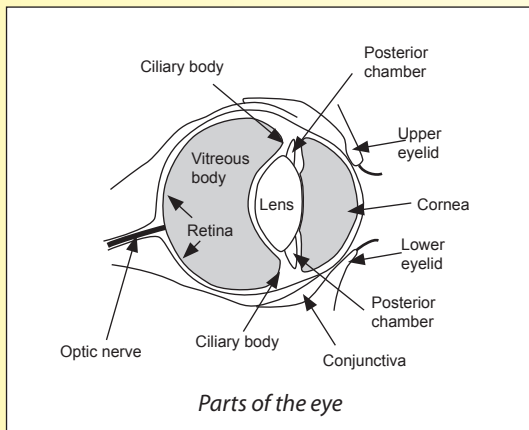
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Corneal ulcer



Avoid barbed wire fences



Top Tip

It's easier to check your horse's eyes out of direct sunlight. By placing the horse in the shade, or in a stable, conditions are better for observing any abnormalities.

Horse SA can assist horse owners to contact their local equine veterinarian or a specialist animal eye veterinarian.

Contact your local Animal and Plant Control Board for advice on weed problems.

The Mt Lofty Ranges Catchment Centre and Horse SA can advise horse owners of upcoming workshops, field days and land management courses. A range of good publications is available.



Mt Lofty Ranges Catchment Program

Supported by Natural Heritage Trust

For more information, contact

Mount Lofty Ranges Catchment Centre

Phone (08) 8391 7500

or

Horse SA

Phone (08) 8294 2460



**HORSE FEDERATION
of SOUTH AUSTRALIA**