

Hives

Allergic reaction resulting in localized edemas or swellings in multiple sites.

The swellings result when the capillaries beneath the skin leak a clear fluid from the blood into the tissue spaces below the skin's surface.

Signs

- Welts on neck and shoulder, but can be all over the body
- Welts are firm to the touch
- Firm finger pressure will leave a 'dent' in the welt
- Welts can converge, forming a larger area
- Depression (sometimes)
- Itchiness (sometimes)
- May, potentially, have mild fever (but usually not)
- Swelling in the throatlatch area or lower jaw (sometimes)
- Swelling in the limbs and/or along the abdomen and sheath or udder (sometimes)
- Restlessness (sometimes)
- Difficulty breathing (rare)
- Sweating (rare)
- Can involve the tissues that line the respiratory and digestive tracts. There may also be respiratory distress (like a severe asthma attack, with wheezing and an increasingly anxious struggle to get air) and colic pain that leads to diarrhea.

First Aid

1. Monitor condition for respiratory distress.
2. Administer 1 packet Dexamethasone powder packet.
3. Administer 2 grams bute paste to reduce inflammation and minimize swelling. (refer to Equine Medications instruction sheet)
4. Sponge down with cool water.
5. Slowly lead the horse back to the trail head if the horse is having difficulty breathing or if the hives are present in the saddle and/or girth area.
6. If hives persist the second day, administer 1 packet Dexamethasone powder packet.
7. If hives persist the **fourth** day, administer 1 packet Dexamethasone powder packet.
8. DO NOT administer Dexamethasone if horse has a fever or to pregnant mares.
9. In the case of an acute allergic reaction (anaphylactic), death is likely due to its rapid progression.
10. Seek veterinary assistance if symptoms progress beyond just hives or if the hives do not respond to the Dex treatment.