



**Cleary Lake Veterinary Hospital**  
**www.clearylakevets.com**  
**952-435-VETS (8387)**

## Administering Eye Medication

Eye injuries are no laughing matter. Eyesight is a very important part of horse survival. If you suspect your horse has an eye injury, please contact us. Eye injuries need to be treated quickly & thoroughly. Sometimes they need to be treated with multiple medications, and most medications need to be given 4 to 8 times per day. Eye injuries can be very painful, and the horse may not want you to medicate the eye. You may need to enlist the help of a friend to hold the horse while you administer the medication. The only way the eye will improve is to get the medication administered properly.

It is not as hard as it sounds, remember that you do not need to spread ointment over the surface of the eye. All you need to do is apply ointment into the corner of the horse's eye or on the inside of the lower lid. The ointment will liquefy with the heat of the horse's eye and when he blinks the ointment will spread across the surface of the eyeball. Most ointments come in a metal tube with a scary looking metal point that the ointment is squeezed out of. It's very important not to touch the eye with the tip of the tube, doing so may cause further injury. You can use the tube to squeeze a small amount into the corner of the horse's eye. Hold the tube at an angle to reduce the risk of poking the eye. If this makes you nervous, you can apply the ointment using the pad of your pointer finger, make sure your nails are short, and your hands are just-washed clean. Place a small amount of ointment (a ½ inch strip) on your pointer finger, pull the lower lid down with the middle finger of the same hand and gently wipe the ointment onto/into the lower lid. Remember during the cold winter months to keep the tubes at room temperature, or they'll freeze, making it difficult to get the medication out.

It would be a good idea to start working with your horse to get him comfortable with the idea of eye medications. You can practice pretending to give eye medications by just going through the motions every time you handle or groom your horse. Gently touching close to the eye while feeding a small treat will make it a positive experience. The horse will learn that every day he is handled he may have his eyes worked with and that it is a safe, normal, occurrence.

Even if you've got a well behaved horse, eye medications don't always go smoothly. Your horse may tire of the treatments very quickly, or the injury may

be too severe to treat at home. It may be necessary to have the horse hospitalized and a subpalpebral lavage put in. You and your veterinarian make up your horse's primary care team. Keep in contact during the course of eye medications, and let them know about any problems or potential problems right away. If your horse sustains an eye injury, please contact your veterinarian immediately. In the meantime move your horse inside out of the sunlight. Do not place a fan on your horse if they have an eye injury. You can also braid the forelock while waiting for your veterinarian to arrive.



### **Subpalpebral Lavage**

Medication is slowly pushed through the tubing, gently showering the eye through a footplate that rests under the eyelid.

As always please call our office if you have any questions.

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