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VOL. 69

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EXTRA



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4 Exercises for a WINNING EQUITATION ROUND

Stacia Klein Madden shares how she gets her students ready for big competitions.

BY STACIA KLEIN MADDEN WITH JOCELYN PIERCE
PHOTOS BY SANDRA OLIYNYK

Leading up to a big competition, like the USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals—East, I always want to make sure my students and their horses are well prepared. To do this, I set a course with questions they will likely see at the competition and break it down in manageable sections. The course we are going to practice for this article is an adaption of a previous year's USEF Talent Search Final. While I can't predict exactly what's going to be in the class again, perhaps we will see some form of these questions.

Almost all the exercises in this schooling session focus on rideability. The big questions will be on steering and the ability to lengthen and shorten the horse's stride while maintaining the horse's jumping style. But the main goal for this session is to present the exercises so the horses can understand and succeed, which will build the confidence of both horse and rider.

Before tackling the individual jumping exercises, we do a light warm-up on the flat followed by a simple jumping warm-up with a few cavalletti to introduce the horses to some gymnastic elements.

Warm-Up on the Flat

When getting ready for a big competition, the emphasis is really on jumping so I don't spend too much time warming up on the flat. Since the jumping exercises are going to be questions on steering and going from long to short and short to long, I have my students practice this on the flat in trot and



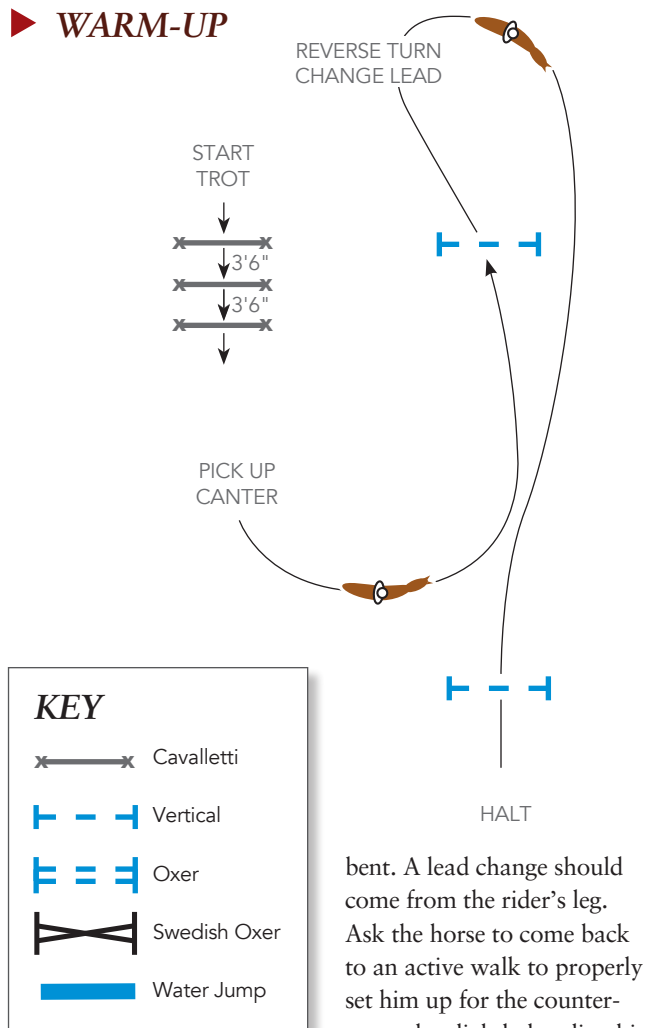
▲ To prepare for the upcoming USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals, Abby Jorgensen and Clash Heldenlaan Z practice Exercise 1 (see page 5), riding over the center of a Swedish oxer.

canter. It's also important to ride from the leg to the hand to make a good connection and create balance, so the horse can be adjustable in his jumping efforts.

Start in a nice extended trot rising on the long sides of the ring, then shorten the step to a working trot sitting on the short sides. To get the horse light to the inside leg and rein, ask for a few steps of shoulder-in, and then allow him to go forward and straight.

Pick up the canter and counter bend slightly down the long sides of the ring to prepare for counter-canter. We counter bend the horse before counter-canter because it's a good test to make sure the horse isn't going to anticipate a flying change. He should not change his lead because of the way he's

► WARM-UP



from the inside leg. Practicing the counter-canter is important because it is one of the tests riders will see in competition. After about a lap in counter-canter, make a reverse turn back (turning from the inside of the arena to the outside) to the true lead and do an extended canter down the long side of the ring, then back to working canter on the short end, continuing to go back and forth from lengthening and shortening to make sure the horse's stride is open enough for the forward parts of

bent. A lead change should come from the rider's leg. Ask the horse to come back to an active walk to properly set him up for the counter-canter by slightly bending him toward the lead and cantering



◀ Abby separates her hands to help guide and collect Clash through the cavalletti exercise, which is a good introduction to the more complicated gymnastic exercises to come.

jumping exercises to come. Then, change direction and repeat the trot and canter work. Once the horse is warmed up on the flat, shorten your stirrups a hole or two before jumping.

Warm-Up Over Fences

Setup: Place three raised cavalletti 3-foot-6-inches apart in the center of the ring. Set two single verticals with nice ground lines on the rail.

Purpose: This exercise warms up the horse and rider for the exercises to come. The cavalletti are a good introduction for the more complicated gymnastic exercises they will practice later. Additionally, the long approaches to single jumps with nice ground lines with one jump off each lead are a good place to start before getting into more difficult exercises.

The Exercise: Tracking left, trot three cavalletti. Then pick up a canter, jump the first vertical, ride a reverse turn and change leads, then jump the second vertical on the right lead.

Setup Note

I set the course so it's very comfortable and inviting. For riders and horses competing at 3-foot-3, I set them at 3-foot or 3-foot-3. For riders and horses competing at 3-foot-6, I set them at 3-foot-3 or 3-foot-6. You can make the jumps a little bit taller or wider, but keep in mind that will affect how some of the distances ride.

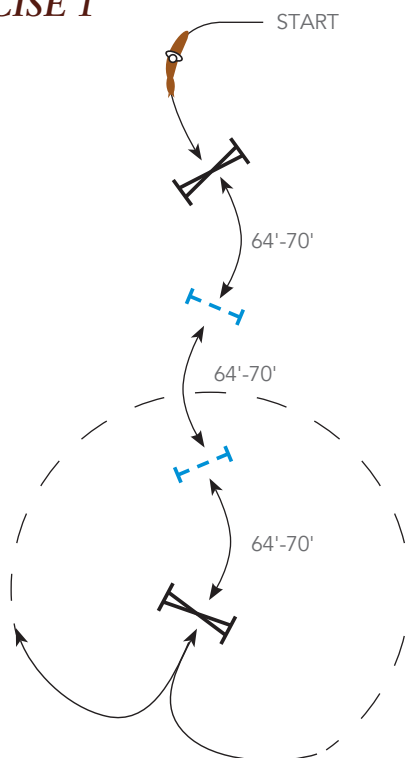
AMY K. DRAGOO



ABOUT STACIA KLEIN MADDEN

Known as one of the most successful trainers of young riders in the country, Stacia Klein Madden began her career as a successful Junior, winning the 1987 ASPCA Maclay National Championship and placing in the USEF National Hunter Seat Medal Final and USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals—East. She turned professional in 1988 and started working out of Beacon Hill Show Stables, now located in Colts Neck, New Jersey. Madden also worked for Johnny Barker in North Carolina, before returning to Beacon Hill where she began teaching and developed a passion for working with young riders and matching them with horses.

► EXERCISE 1



How to Ride It: When riding toward the trot cavalletti, separate your hands to help rate your horse's speed and steer, to guide and to collect. Stay a little to the front of the saddle over the trot cavalletti so you don't fall back on your horse. After the last cavalletti, collect, keep contact on the outside rein, pick up the left lead canter, get off the horse's back and jump the single vertical out of stride. You want the horse to be connected in the bridle and adjustable in his canter. Then, like you practiced on the flat, make a reverse turn, change your lead and ride the long approach over the other vertical on the right lead. If your horse is heavy in the bridle or getting quick, halt him in a straight line after the last fence.

Exercise 1

Setup: Build a bending line of four fences, all set 64-70 feet apart in the center of the ring. The line will be jumped in both directions, and includes a Swedish oxer, wall, liverpool, and a second Swedish oxer.

Purpose: The bending lines can be ridden in a very direct four-to-four-to-four strides, or with a little shape in five-to-five-to-five strides. We will ride the five-five-five to show steering, control and straightness.

The Exercise: Start by jumping the last Swedish oxer in the line on a long approach to give the horse a warm-up fence. Then begin the exercise. Track left, canter down the long side and jump the first Swedish oxer, put in five strides to the wall,

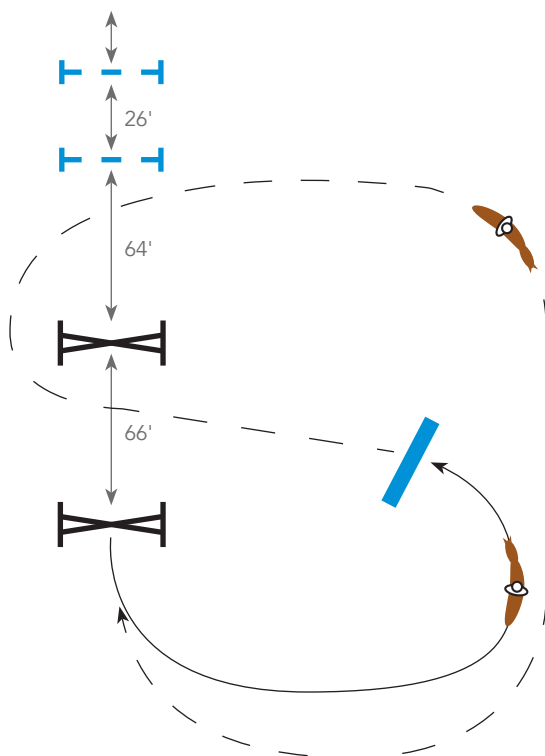
five strides to the liverpool and five strides to the second Swedish oxer. Since you come off the turn to the first jump from the left, when you finish over the Swedish oxer, stay to the right, circle through the middle, and then jump the line in the opposite direction off the right lead.

How to Ride It: In this exercise, turn with both reins to the middle of the fences. This is challenging if you depend on the crest release instead of an automatic release or if you have a bad habit of opening your thumb and resting it on the horse's neck because you're not able to be independent and steer each stride. The horse doesn't necessarily have to land on the correct lead in the line, but if you're on the correct track, balanced and riding leg to hand, the horse should be able to make the change in the middle of the line.

I like to use the Swedish oxers on the outs because riders tend to track wide by using their track instead of collecting the horse to fit the striding. If you overshoot the track instead of collecting the horse, you will end up on the tall side of the Swedish oxer and could knock it down. Keep in mind if you have to override the liverpool because the horse hasn't jumped it yet today, then it's going to be a bit harder to get him back together and might make the striding to the next jump a little shorter.

Exercise 2

► EXERCISE 2





▲ **Exercise 2:** Katie Kanner has jumped the out of the one-stride and next will ride a steady four strides to the first Swedish oxer. Kid Safari DH is wearing a fly mask for protection from the sun because of an eye issue.

a liverpool or regular oxer instead.) I like to use striped rails on the verticals because it helps the rider focus on keeping the horse in the middle.

Purpose: This is a good test of adjustability to see how well the riders can lengthen and shorten the stride and keep the horse in the middle of the jumps. The one-stride requires the horse and rider come in at a specific speed and distance and the rider has to judge the striding in the four stride and then again in the longer four stride, all while maintaining straightness because of the Swedish oxers. Because of this, it's also a good line to practice the automatic release, which is more advanced than the crest release.

The Exercise: The line will be jumped in both directions, starting with the left lead over the in-and-out verticals. Pick up the left lead canter and jump the one stride, to the nice four to the longer four. Once you've ridden through the line, change direction over the water jump, make a big circle, and jump the exercise from the other way, starting with the Swedish oxers. Coming from this direction, the line will ride as a long four to a steady four to a short one.

How to Ride It: Try to jump in the middle of the fences. Ride with short reins and a strong position through the line. At the water, give a nice release, get right up to the box and ask the horse to stretch across so he doesn't land in it. Then quickly check that your reins are short enough to collect and balance for the next fence. The water might encourage the horse to come in on a big stride, which may help to get the

Setup: Build an outside line of four fences. Set two verticals one stride (26 feet) apart, then measure four strides (64 feet) to a Swedish oxer and then a longer four strides (66 feet) to a second Swedish oxer. Set a water jump on an angle toward the end of the ring. (If you're not jumping water jumps, set

long four stride between the Swedish oxers. Use your voice going into the steady four and short one-stride to collect your horse and then finish with a nice, straight halt. The halt reinforces the idea that you're asking the horse to collect.

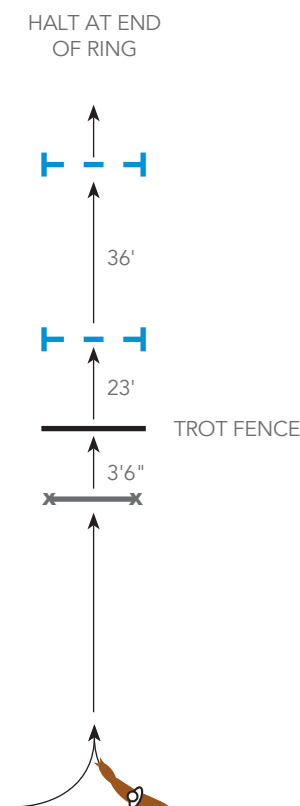
Exercise 3

Setup: Set a cavalletti on the ground as a placement rail (3-foot-6) followed by a trot jump vertical or crossrail, then a one-stride (23 feet) to a vertical, then two strides (36 feet) to a vertical.

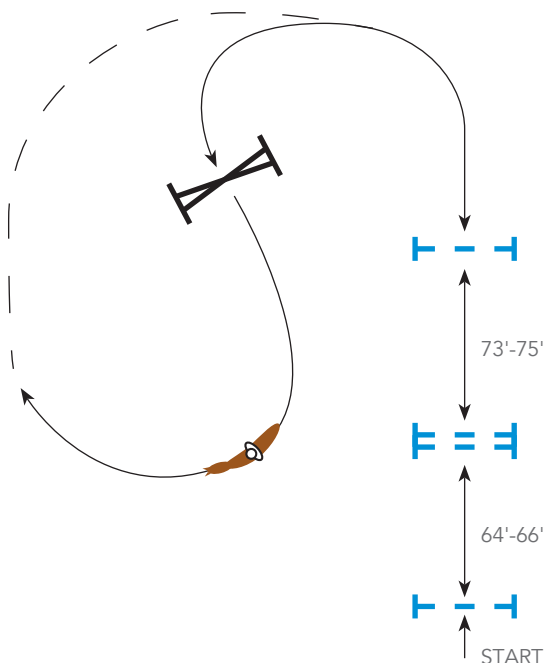
Purpose: A trot jump is a typical test at a competition that includes a gymnastics phase so it's important to practice this as it can be challenging for horses and riders because it takes a lot of balance and good timing. The placement rail, which will help the horse with timing, is the same cavalletti I used in our jumping warm-up because I want the horses to be comfortable with trotting raised cavalletti before they are faced with three obstacles behind it, which might make them anxious and want to rush.

The Exercise: Trot over the cavalletti placement rail and the trot jump, then canter one stride to the first vertical and two strides to the second vertical.

► EXERCISE 3



► EXERCISE 4



How to Ride It: Come to the trot fence off the right approach. Keep your upper body tall to invite your horse to wait and be patient. For horses that might be cautious or want to rush the jump and add a canter step, try to keep a soft leg to maintain your connection at the trot. Try not to interfere with your horse's jump and stay balanced at the second and third verticals. When you land from the third jump, turn left and canter down the long side, then bring the horse back to trot and jump the exercise from the left approach. After the second time through, halt straight. The horses do so many courses during the year when you're schooling, it's good to ask for a straight halt after a line to make sure the horse is listening.

Exercise 4

Setup: Build an outside line consisting of vertical to an oxer, four strides (64-66 feet) apart, and then another vertical five strides (73-75 feet) from the oxer.

Purpose: Often the first question in a championship is something that is a bit bold to show that the rider understands how to come in the ring and put the horse right up to the bit. It's also a good test to show the rider's ability to lengthen and shorten. This would potentially be an early line in the course at the competition.

The Exercise: Start by cantering on the left lead and ride the long four to short five. Change direction over the Swedish oxer used in Exercise 1, circle and approach the line from the opposite direction.

How to Ride It: Set your pace on an open stride and start



▲ Exercise 4 is a good example of what could be the first question in a championship—the line is a bit bold to show that the riders understand how to go forward and to also show their ability to lengthen and shorten the horse's stride.

with the long four, then collect your stride to make the short five. Pay attention to every step. Some strides the horse may try to get behind you and need to be put up to the bit by adding your leg. Some strides a horse might be trying to pull the reins through your fingers and will need a half-halt. When you change direction over the Swedish oxer and circle, it should help get the horse soft so you can come back balanced and round, with weight in your heels and wide hands for the collected five. Collect early enough in the five-stride line so that you're coming forward the last stride. This will prepare the horse for the long four that's coming next and will give the appearance of an invisible adjustment. Then halt in a straight line after the last fence.

I like to end the session with the horse doing the exercises correctly, but I never want to drill him over and over to the point where he gets exhausted. Horses usually do something better the second time, which is what we are looking for in this schooling session. By practicing these exercises, you and your horse will feel prepared to tackle the competition course with confidence. 🐾

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Skin Problems Big and Small

How to recognize a variety of common conditions that affect horses.

Skin is the largest organ of a horse's body and one of the most vulnerable as it protects against an array of external threats such as bacteria, environmental allergens, chemicals and extreme temperatures. Good grooming and management practices can help to keep skin healthy. But problems still may arise. Here's a look at a variety of common equine skin conditions (arranged alphabetically) along with suggestions for care. Your veterinarian will also be a valuable resource in confirming the identity of any skin ailment and recommending treatment.

- **Aural plaques:** flaky white patches on the inner surface of the ear; occur when chronic fly irritation causes inflammation. Topical application of an antiviral or steroid cream can clear the plaques and soothe the skin, but any pigment loss under the skin is permanent. Ear hair provides a natural defense against flies, so minimize trimming as a preventive. Protect clipped areas with repellent or a fly mask with ear covers.
- **Dandruff:** skin oil that sheds from the coat as either small, dry flakes or large, waxy crusts. Dry dandruff typically forms at the base of the mane and tail and on the girth area; oily dandruff usually appears on the elbows, hocks and lower legs. Either type results from a variety of causes, including allergies, insects, poor nutrition and undiagnosed illness, but the most common causes for crusty, scaly skin are bacterial infections (*Staphylococcus*). Some breeds, such as Thoroughbreds and Arabians, are more affected than others. Anti-dandruff shampoo formulated for horses can dissolve flakes and scales; products containing an

► Hives are soft, raised, itchy bumps that develop as part of a reaction to an insect bite or sting, medication or exposure to an allergen.



antibacterial such as chlorhexidine will help to resolve large, waxy crusts; and a feed supplement may improve skin and coat condition.

- **Hives:** soft, raised, itchy bumps that develop and disappear often suddenly as part of a reaction to an insect bite or sting, medication or exposure to an allergen. May be seen on any part of the body, but mainly occur on the back, flanks, legs, neck and eyelids. Hives usually resolve without treatment; identifying and preventing exposure to the causative agent may be necessary in chronic cases.
- **Insect bite hypersensitivity:** allergic skin disease caused primarily by the saliva of insects of the genus *Culicoides* (midges, gnats, no-see-ums). Signs include itching, skin thickening, lesions, scaling, crusting, hair loss and hives. Appears primarily on the face, mane, ears, trunk and tail. Corticosteroids can relieve the cycle of itching, but prevention is key: Apply fly spray; stable horses at dusk and dawn (the insects' preferred feeding times); use fans to create air currents too challenging for the flies to navigate; and maintain a clean, dry environment to disrupt breeding and reduce numbers.
- **Lice:** tiny wingless parasitic insects that live in the haircoat and are visible upon inspection. There are two types: *chewing*, which feed on hair and dead skin, and *blood-sucking*. Both cause itchiness, and horses may bite at or rub infested areas, causing hair loss and skin damage. Sucking lice create small wounds that may become infected. To treat: Use a spray containing pyrethrin, synthetic pyrethrin or the organophosphate coumaphos.

- **Mange:** infestation by a parasitic mite that feeds by piercing the horse's skin



ALANA HARRISON
▶ Melanoma tumors are typically found under the tail, around the anus, on the eyelids and in the corners of the mouth.

or burrowing into it. Signs include red, moist, crusty skin patches and intense itching over the body (sarcoptic mange), ears (psoroptic mange) and lower legs (chorioptic mange). The condition is passed from horse to horse through direct contact or via shared equipment. A topical or oral acaricide, such as ivermectin or moxidectin, will eliminate mites. A topical shampoo may help to remove crusting and scabs.

local chemotherapy; oral medication and immunotherapy.

- **Photosensitivity:** painful inflammation of lightly or unpigmented patches of skin; much more extensive than sunburn. Results from the ingestion of plant toxins that eventually circulate in the capillaries near the skin surface and are activated by sunlight. The toxins are present in common pasture plants, including St. John's wort, buck-

sis, a microorganism that resembles bacteria and fungi and normally lives on skin. Wet conditions stimulate the release of spores and spread the infection. Treatment involves antibiotics. Topical antibacterial shampoo may be used to soak scabs so they can be removed. Clipping affected areas may be necessary. Isolate infected horses to reduce the spread of disease.

- **Ringworm:** fungal infection that appears as an itchy, circular pattern of hair loss, usually on the girth and saddle areas. The fungi are found in soil and can be picked up when a horse digs, rolls or lies down. Typically, the infection is transmitted through shared tack and grooming supplies. Ringworm can clear without treatment. Antifungal shampoo or topical therapy can speed recovery. To prevent spread and recurrence, disinfect equipment and other potentially contaminated surfaces.

- **Sarcoid:** tumor caused by papilloma-virus infection; usually not painful or itchy. There are six distinct types:
 - verrucose*—gray, flat, scaly with an irregular surface, slow-growing; often seen on the face, trunk or sheath; the least aggressive sarcoid tumor
 - occult*—small, flat, gray, hairless, slow-growing; may not change for years; usually occurs around the mouth, eyes, neck and hairless areas, such as the inside of the forelimbs, armpits and thighs
 - nodular*—distinct solid lump; may ulcerate and bleed, can appear singly or number in the hundreds usually on the groin, sheath or eyelids
 - fibroblastic*—aggressive and fast-growing, irregularly shaped, firm, fleshy raised lump; usually smooth and hairless; may ulcerate and bleed; often occurs in clusters on the eyelid, groin, lower limbs, coronary band and the site of a skin wound or trauma
 - mixed*—a combination of two or more types

Good grooming and management practices can help to keep skin healthy. But problems still may arise.

- **Melanoma:** tumor of the skin cells that produce pigment (melanocytes); common in aging gray horses due to the gray gene; appears as a raised, round, firm black nodule; typically found under the tail, around the anus, on the eyelids and in the corners of the mouth. Most melanomas are benign, and horses may require no medical intervention. Treatment options include removal via surgery, cryotherapy or laser;

wheat, bishop's weed, spring parsley and some varieties of clover, particularly alsike. Photosensitivity may also be related to a few types of antibiotics (tetracyclines) and impaired liver function. To treat: Relieve pain, prevent infection, eliminate exposure to the cause, apply sunblock and outfit horses in UV protective sheets and masks.

- **Rainrot:** crusted, painful skin infection caused by *Dermatophilus congolensis*

malevolent—rare, aggressive tumor that spreads extensively through skin; may ulcerate and bleed; often forms on the jaw, face, elbow or inner thigh.

Treatment options for all types of sarcoids include surgical removal, immunotherapy, chemotherapy, cryotherapy and laser surgery. The recurrence rate in horses is high.

- **Scratches:** painful scabby or oozing skin infection above the heels; caused by a mix of bacteria, fungi and parasites that enter breaks in skin; most often occurs when footing is excessively wet, muddy or dirty. Mild cases may resolve by cleaning and clipping the affected area and keeping it dry. Severe cases may require topical treatment with an antibacterial, antifungal or steroid alone or in a mix; oral antibiotics may be necessary for extensive conditions.

- **Summer sore:** itchy, inflamed lesion caused by the migrating larvae of gastric worms (*Habronema* and *Draschia* species); may become swollen and raw as horse rubs, ooze blood-tinged

▼ Sweet itch is an allergic skin condition caused by biting midges that causes intense itching.



fluid and fill with lumpy, reddish granulation tissue. Treatment includes topical or systemic glucocorticoids or a topical mixture of glucocorticoids and dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO); excess granulation tissue may require surgical removal.

- **Sunburn:** painful reddening, inflammation and possible blistering and peeling of pale or nonpigmented areas of the skin caused by overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays. Treat with a soothing, moisturizing topical ointment, such as zinc oxide or silver sulfadiazine. To prevent: Stable during the day, provide shade outdoors, apply UV sunscreen (a horse-specific product or one that is child-safe, at least SPF 30), use protective fly sheets and masks.
- **Sweet itch:** allergic skin disease caused by biting midges (*Culicoides*). Salivary proteins injected into the skin cause intense itching. The mane, tail and withers are most often affected. Rubbing to relieve the itch can produce open wounds and secondary infections. Treatment may rely on topical corticosteroids and/or antihistamines. Preventive measures include insect repellent, fly sheets, face and ear masks and stabling from dusk to dawn when *Culicoides* are most active.
- **Vitiligo:** autoimmune destruction of cells that produce melanin, the natural pigment that colors skin and hair. Appears as white or light patches that vary in size and location; often develops around the lips and on the muzzle



▲ Warts are small, rough growths caused by papillomavirus that typically resolve on their own.

and eyelids. Vitiligo is more common in gray horses; it is linked to an immune response against melanomas, which may be present in the perineal and tail areas. There is no treatment.

- **Warts:** small, rough, gray-white growths caused by papillomavirus; often seen on the muzzle, ears, genitals and pasterns of horses age 4 and younger whose immune system has yet to fully mature. Most warts resolve on their own. Treat inflamed or sore spots with an over-the-counter antiseptic or topical moisturizing lotion. Surgery, topical cream or cryosurgery may be an option for warts causing discomfort. Papillomavirus is contagious, so quarantine any infected individual, don't share equipment and disinfect all surfaces to kill lingering organisms. 🐾



Practical Horseman thanks Rosanna Marsella, DVM, DACVD, for her technical assistance in the preparation of this article. A veterinary dermatologist, Dr. Marsella is a professor at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine in Gainesville, where she also serves as the director of the laboratory of comparative dermatology.

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