

Curing Recurrent Uveitis (Moon Blindness)

As with so many equine illnesses there are a number of different names used. Your veterinarian may call the condition periodic ophthalmia. More horses go blind from this condition than from anything else. Your veterinarian should be called at once when any eye problem is noticed. There are many different conditions and you should never try to diagnose and treat without a veterinarian. Too many horses go blind when their eyesight could have been saved.

There are many fine websites with good information, descriptions, and pictures. It is not our goal to educate you concerning this condition but to give you information for preventing blindness once a horse has been diagnosed. It is very important to follow the instructions for treatment to the letter after diagnosis.

Often the vet will have you apply NSAIDs (corticosteroids) given topically to dilate the pupil. Usually, the horse should be kept up in a dark stall since the eye is dilated and sunlight can cause additional harm. Our horses have become so stressed from being stalled for weeks that they will develop ulcers and colic. We use the double-strapped fly masks and cover the inside of the fly mask over the affected eye with duct tape. (The whole side of the fly mask will be covered to completely block out the sunlight.) For horses that try to remove their fly masks, we even duct tape the closure to prevent its removal. Now the horse can be turned out with the other horses and will not be as stressed. A clean fly mask should be put on each day.

HPS has dealt with many different types of eye problems to include many cases of recurrent uveitis. Our grandmothers and mothers were right when they told you, "Eat your carrots. They are good for your eyes." We have found it is the beta carotene in the carrots that is so beneficial. There have been studies done and they indicated that beta carotene did not help with equine eye diseases. We believe the problem with these studies is they did not give enough beta carotene to the horses being studied.

HPS has experimented and found that horses treated for recurrent uveitis need 75,000 units beta carotene morning and evening for the rest of their lives. If you stop treatment, the recurrent uveitis may very well return. If you have done your homework concerning this illness, you know that each incident further damages the eye. The other benefit of beta carotene is the potential for a slight improvement of the horse's eye sight.

Lutein is also of benefit to horse's eyes and we give one gel cap in their feed also. Both lutein and beta carotene are becoming more difficult to find in drug stores. Most of the vitamins we use for the horses are ordered from <http://www.swanson.com/>. They carry both items. The gel caps are just dropped into the horse's feed morning and evening.

Some light-colored horses are very prone to recurrent uveitis and we give those horses one 25,000 IU of beta carotene morning and evening. Appaloosas are a breed that are prone to recurrent uveitis.

We love to hear your success stories so feel free to email HPS.

If HPS has helped you and your horse, please help the rescued horses with a donation.