

## Cobs and CPL

Cobs and Heavy horses are well known for their fabulous flowing feathers on the lower limbs of the front and hind limbs, together with glorious manes, tails and even moustaches. This ability to produce keratinised hair extends to their chestnuts and ergots which can also be larger than non- cobs



### What are the signs of mite infection?

Your horse will be restless especially at night, with stamping the feet, and nibbling wherever they can reach on the limbs. They will try to rub them, and this continual irritation causes secondary infections and open wounds to develop.

The lymphatic system is designed to remove waste products from around the body and pass these to the lymph nodes for clearance. In many cob type horses this fails, and the fluids build up making the legs swollen and uncomfortable, this can result in deep skin folds and permanent thickening and distortion of the limbs. This swelling combined with mite infection leads to problem limbs that often require veterinary help to deal with the mites, the swelling and the infection.

The condition of swollen limbs with poor lymphatic drainage is known as Chronic Progressive lymphoedema and there is a lot of good advice for equine owners on this website:  
<https://chronicprogressivelymphoedema.com/>

#### Early-stage CPL



How do we treat the infections? - Mites are surface living arachnids, and the most effective treatments are aimed at reducing their numbers on the animal and in the environment.

- Clipping the affected areas
- Washing with a keratinolytic shampoo such as proprietary anti-dandruff shampoos, to remove excess scale and sebum
- Using topical chemicals as washes and sprays
- Using injectable drugs
- Cleaning the environment
- Treating secondary infections and pain with antibiotics and pain relief

#### Severe CPL



Topical chemical- Typically an ivermectin product is used in a wash to kill the mites, this is repeated in 3 weeks to remove any newly hatched mites.

Injectable- injectable doramectin used on two occasion to eliminate the mites.

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## Management of the problem

This can be an extremely challenging life- long concern for owners of affected horses.

Ideally **clipping** the limbs makes it far easier to keep them in good condition and avoids a build-up of mites and scurf. Many horses find it hard to tolerate clipping, so careful desensitizing them to clippers or the use of sedation may be needed.



**Avoid** bedding affected horses on **straw** as this is usually where mites come from

Treat **all** horses that are in contact, not just the visibly affected one. This is because some horses carry the mites without itching themselves but can then spread them to other horses.

**Clean** and **disinfect** stables, brushes, bandages etc that come in contact with your horse regularly to reduce the build of mites in the environment.

Keep the lower limbs **dry** and **mud free**- this can be incredibly hard in winter but ideally have some dry standing for this type of horse during the winter period. You may need to wash the limbs to remove mud but always dry them exceptionally well and apply oil after use.

Use **oil** to protect the lower limbs from mud and secondary infections- pig oil and sulphur is a useful traditional recipe for this type of horse.

**Exercise**- is a vital part of improving the lymphatic circulation and reducing the filling in the limbs, and there is some evidence that a low sugar, high fibre diet with good levels of antioxidants helps the immune system in such cases.

## How can we help?

Ask us about support for desensitising your horse to clippers using behaviour modification, our team are very happy to advise.

We can provide sedation of necessary – either oral or injectable

We supply leg mite wash and doramectin injections, as well as pain relief and antibiotics if the problem is severe.



## Environmental considerations

The chemicals that we use are harmful to the environment, so it is preferable to manage and prevent the problem with clipping, washing and using oil externally, and to rely on chemical methods of control as a last resort.

[Client Meeting- Guest Speaker](#)

[Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026](#)

[Equine Colic @ Chard Equestrian 7-7.30pm RSVP 01297304007](#)