

Bandaging

Executive Director of the British Grooms Association, provides some tips for applying bandages

Bandaging can provide both protection and support for the horse while working, travelling, resting or recovering from an injury. It is essential that you use proper leg bandaging techniques. Applied incorrectly, bandages may not only fail to do their job but they can also restrict blood flow and potentially cause discomfort.



Reasons to Bandage

Leg bandages are beneficial for various reasons:

- To provide support for tendons and ligaments during strenuous workouts
- To protect legs from concussion and impact
- To prevent or reduce swelling after exercise, injury or during stabling
- To shield leg wounds from contamination and aid in healing

For a stable bandage you will require an adequate amount of padding, eg. cotton wool wrap or leg quilts, secured by a stable bandage. If a wound is involved a sterile absorbent dressing may be required as well.

If you are bandaging for exercise then you will either use fluffy polo wraps if working in the arena or exercise bandages with pads or gamgee if going cross-country.

Padding is essential for protecting the limbs and will help to disperse the pressure evenly and prevent blood flow from being restricted. The bandage should be at least two inches wide to avoid a tourniquet-like effect.

General Guidelines

If you have never bandaged a horse's legs before, ask your vet or an experienced groom to demonstrate the proper techniques. Practice under his or her supervision before doing it on your own. Follow these basic guidelines to apply a stable bandage:

- Start with clean and dry legs, padding and bandages.
- If there is a wound, make sure it has been properly cleaned and dressed according to your vet's recommendations.
- Apply the padding so it lies flat and wrinkle-free against the skin.
- Start the bandage at the inside of the cannon bone above the fetlock joint. Do not begin or end over a joint as movement will tend to loosen the bandage and cause it to come unwrapped.

- Bandage the leg from front to back, outside to inside.
- Bandage in a spiral pattern, working down the leg and up again.
- Use uniform pressure on the bandage to compress the padding. Make sure no lumps or ridges form beneath the bandage.
- Be careful not to wrap the legs too tightly to avoid creating pressure points.
- Avoid applying bandages too loosely. If loose bandages slip, they will not provide proper support and may endanger the horse.
- Leg padding and bandages should extend below the coronet band of the hoof to protect the area.
- Re-bandage the legs every day to minimise the chance of circulation problems caused by slippage, or skin irritation due to dirt or debris entering the bandages.
- Before re-bandaging take a few minutes to examine the legs for any signs of heat, swelling or irritation.



Lucy Katan's Top Tips

- When rolling a bandage always begin by doing the velcro up and then continue to roll the bandage with the velcro on the inside. Roll the bandage as neatly and tightly as possible as this will help when putting it on again.
- To prevent annoying unraveling, once the bandage is rolled, tuck the corner of the flap into your rolled bandage
- Don't be afraid to ask for help with your bandaging. It is crucial that you get it right as an incorrectly applied bandage can cause discomfort and potentially injury. A third hand is incredibly helpful when applying stable bandages for veterinary purposes.
- When you take the bandages out of the washing machine, always untangle them when they are wet - it is far easier than waiting for them to dry.
- When applying exercise bandages for cross-country – ALWAYS secure them with PVC tape; there is nothing more dangerous than galloping full speed with bandages unwinding.