

Insect Bite Hypersensitivity in Horses

The Educated Horseman: Health Series



Insect bite hypersensitivity — also called sweet itch, seasonal recurrent dermatitis or Queensland itch — is a common ailment in horses during warmer weather. The culicoides midge (no-see-um gnat) bites the horse, causing an allergic reaction, inflammation, extremely itchy skin and hair loss along the chest, shoulders, face, mane, tail and midline of the abdomen. While there is no effective treatment, prevention and insect control are the best methods to manage this uncomfortable condition.

Prevention and Insect Control

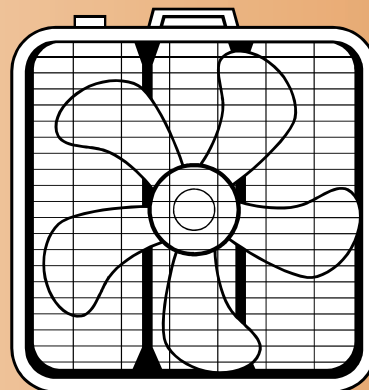
Fly Spray

Use an insecticide with a minimum of 2% permethrin. Higher concentrations can be used but can cause skin sensitivities.



Fans

Use them in the barn as culicoides midges are not effective fliers.



Stall

Stall horses when the gnats are most active (dawn and dusk).



Physical barriers

Ultra-fine netting around stall windows, fly masks, fly sheets and leg wraps.



Inflammation reduction

Omega 3 supplements, such as **crushed flaxseed** at 1 pound per/1,000 pounds of body weight, and **antihistamines** can aid in the reduction of inflammation.



Topical relief

Corticosteroids and shampoos are available and may help reduce itching.

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