

# GENERAL BANDAGING GUIDELINES

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- **When applying or removing bandages, it is dangerous to kneel in the vicinity of the horse's legs. You should adopt a bending or crouching position at the side of the horse.**
- Before use, bandages must be correctly rolled, with the tapes or Velcro in the center.

## BANDAGE MATERIALS

Bandages are made up of leg wraps, leg pads, and fasteners. Many kinds of bandage materials are available, but Pony Club uses only certain kinds. These are the safest and most suitable for the kind of bandaging you do and are less likely to cause damage to your pony's legs.

### Bandages (or Wraps)

*Flannel Bandages:* Made of heavy flannel, which can be bought by the yard and torn into bandage strips. They should be 4 to 5 inches wide and 15 inches long; large horses may need shipping bandages 5 inches wide and 16 feet long. Flannel bandages are easy to launder and mend, but they do not stretch and may be bulky.

*Knit bandages (track bandages):* Made of cotton knit or polyester double-knit. These bandages are too short and narrow for shipping bandages, but two of them sewn together end to end make one bandage the right length for shipping. Make sure that you apply them with the seam allowance facing out away from the leg.

*Other bandages:* There are other types of bandage materials, including elastic, crepe, conforming gauze, and others. These are often designed for special purposes, such as treatment or exercise bandages. Don't use them without assistance from your instructor or veterinarian, as certain bandage materials make it easy to damage a horse's tendons.

### Leg Pads

A bandage must always be applied over a leg pad. The padding distributes the pressure evenly and is compressed so that it fits snugly against the structures of the leg. Padding must be soft, smooth, and thick enough to distribute pressure evenly, without binding or causing too much pressure on a tendon, joint, or bony prominence. The size and thickness of the padding depends upon the type of bandage and the size of the horse's leg.

Leg pads are usually from 14 to 18 inches high (depending on the length of the horse's leg and whether used for shipping or stable bandages) and about 18 to 24 inches long. Sheet cottons are preferred for use in Pony Club. A single leg pad is made by putting together 6 to 10 sheets of cotton, folded lengthwise. (For hind leg pads for large horses, use 7 or 8 sheets and re-fold them width-wise, to make them taller.) For shipping bandages, the cotton should reach from the ground to 1 inch above the bottom of the hock or knee joint. For standing bandages, they should be slightly shorter (from hock or knee joint to the coronary band).

Sheet cottons can be covered with cheesecloth to make them last longer. They are not washable and should be discarded when they become soiled or lumpy.

There are other kinds of leg pads, including polyester batting and cotton quilts. Check with your instructor before using these, especially for Pony Club ratings.

### Fasteners

The end of a bandage must be securely fastened so that it cannot come loose and trip the horse. Fasteners must be placed on the outside of the leg so that they cannot be pulled loose if struck by the opposite foot. They should be placed in the cannon area, never over a joint or the back of a tendon.

To fasten a bandage, use two bandage pins (large safety pins) per leg. The pins are fastened through several layers of bandage and may be crossed. Do not use the narrow tape ties that come attached to some bandages. These can cause a tight ring of pressure around the horse's leg, with may interfere with circulation or

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damage the tendons. Velcro fasteners may be used if they do not cause a continuous ring of pressure around the leg.

Fasteners such as safety pins and Velcro fasteners should be reinforced with masking tape. This should be applied in a spiral, not in a continuous band. *Never apply any kind of fastener in a way that makes a continuous band around a pony's leg or indents the bandage.* This can put harmful pressure on the tendons and can interfere with circulation in the leg.

## REMOVING BANDAGES

When you remove bandages, undo them gently but quickly by passing them from one hand to the other; don't try to roll them up as you take them off. Rub the legs (especially the back tendons and fetlock joint) after removing the bandages. Re-roll the leg pads, and either re-roll the bandages for use again or set them aside to be laundered.

## IMPORTANT POINTS FOR SAFE BANDAGING

- Don't sit or kneel when bandaging. Bend or squat so that you can keep your balance and get out of the way if the horse should move.
- Clean the legs before bandaging, and make sure there is nothing underneath the padding that could irritate the leg or cause pressure. It is okay to bandage over a leg that is wet but clean; bandaging with an absorbent padding like sheet cotton is a good way to dry the leg.
- Make sure there is sufficient padding under the whole bandage, and that the padding is smooth and distributed evenly. Don't bandage over lumps, folds, or wrinkles.
- Wrap snugly but not too tightly. You should be able to slip **two fingers** under the finished bandage.
- A bandage must not bind at the knee, hock, or fetlock joint. Don't bandage the back surface of the knee, as this can cause excessive pressure when the horse bends his knee. The padding must extend at least ½ inch beyond the top and bottom edges of the bandage, to keep the edge of the bandage from binding.
- A finished bandage should feel firm and even over its whole length. No part of the bandage should be looser or tighter, and no wrap or fastener should make an indentation in the bandage.
- Liniments must be used with caution, if at all. Some liniments may blister the skin if used under a bandage, especially if the leg is bandaged when wet. Use liniments only with the advice of your veterinarian or instructor. Hand-rubbing each leg in an upward direction for at least 5 minutes is safer and often more effective than using liniment.
- A bandage must be wrapped in the same direction as the leg pad. This makes it smooth instead of creating a lump or ridge that could press against the tendons and cause damage.

