

INDOOR ALLERGENS – EQUINE

HOUSE DUST MITES

These mites are very small, almost transparent, arachnids (mites have 8-legs like spiders). They eat dead skin flakes (epithelia) from both humans and other animals. It is the dust mite droppings and dead body parts, rather than the live dust mites themselves, that provoke an allergic reaction when they are either inhaled or touched.

The mites live in textiles such as rugs, boots, saddle cloths and girth covers. Removing dust mites completely from the environment is impossible, but please see below for some useful tips to help reduce their presence. Mites also like warm, damp conditions so our tips on reducing moulds can help too.



TIPS TO REDUCE HOUSE DUST MITES

- Change rugs, and other textiles such as saddle cloths, as often as possible to keep fabrics clean and mite free.
- Wash rugs and other textiles at hot temperatures (where appropriate), and dry them as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Outside in the sun is ideal (if weather permits) because mites struggle in hot dry conditions.
- Store rugs over winter in air tight packaging, after they have been cleaned and completely dried.
- Reduce humidity and increase ventilation within the stable environment (see also other mould tips).
- Regularly dust the stable with a clean, damp cloth to decrease the food sources available to the mites. Dusting with a damp cloth stops the dust being spread further around the stable.
- Move your horse out of the stable whilst you muck out or clean, and allow time for remaining dust to settle before returning them to it.



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STORAGE MITES

Storage mites are tiny, white arachnids that feed on stored dry foods such as grain and cereals. Correct storage of your horse's hard feed can greatly reduce their exposure to storage mites.

TIPS ON FOOD STORAGE

- Keep feed in dry, cool conditions and never use any feed after the use-by date.
- Store dry feed in its packaging, in resealable plastic containers.
- Clean and thoroughly dry feed containers regularly, especially before adding more feed.
- Clean your horse's feed buckets daily.
- Wipe your horse's muzzle with a damp cloth after eating to remove any dust and food residue.



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MOULDS

Moulds can be found in both indoor and outdoor environments. They are a type of fungus and like warm, damp, and humid conditions best. Moulds spread by producing numerous tiny spores, which are too small to see but float through the air. When these spores are inhaled or touched, they can cause both irritation and allergic reactions. You can help reduce the amount of mould to which your horse is exposed, by reducing dampness and making the environment a difficult place for mould to live and grow in.

Moulds are often found on / in:

- Leather tack and textiles e.g., boots, girths, rugs and saddle cloths (particularly if damp).
- Dusty areas in your horse's stable.
- Water damaged buildings / moist chipboard, behind paint.
- Soil and decaying plant debris (making areas such as the muck heap high risk).
- Damp bedding and forage.
- Stored grains / cereals (storing feed correctly will help to avoid this).
- Fruit and vegetables e.g., carrots.



TIPS TO REDUCE MOULD

- Keep stables well ventilated and treat damp walls with a mould inhibitor.
- Avoid heavy vegetation and climbing plants around or over barns and stabling.
- Keep the stable yard free of fallen leaves and other plant debris.
- Try to position the muck heap away from or downwind of stabling.
- Store tack and other equipment in clean, dry conditions (avoiding clutter). If you have a very damp tack room, using a dehumidifier can help.
- Hang damp textiles such as boots and rugs outside to dry thoroughly, or if possible, use a tumble drier, before storing.
- Source good quality forage, free from mould and dust.
- Store hard feed in clean, dry, watertight feed bins.
- Keep water troughs and dispensers clean and fresh.
- Ensure there are no signs of rot or mould on food sources, particularly fruit and vegetables.
- Periodically check behind storage racks / units etc., as walls behind these areas will have less air-flow.

