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Nineteen-Fifteen

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### ABOUT BLISTERS

By A. S. Alexander, M.D.C.

Blisters are very commonly prescribed in veterinary medicine, but we find that stockmen have erroneous ideas as to their composition and use. The blister primarily is used to bring a big flow of blood into a part. The blood brings in at the same time nutrients from which new tissues are formed and takes away products of inflammation and disease. Building up of tissues is needed where a wound has occurred, or where an abscess has caused a cavity. From such abnormal conditions morbid matters have to be pumped away. Added flow of blood does this.

Blisters, also, are used as "counter-irritants" and then are expected to draw the blood to the surface, or divert it from the part attacked by disease. There is a possibility of such effect; but the chief remedial effect is the greater added supply of fresh blood brought to the part by the irritating effect of the blister. When a blister is applied to a bony growth, such as ringbone or spavin, it is expected to do one of two things, viz., either cause reabsorption of the growth, or complete the formation of false bone by bringing down, in the increased blood flow, the salts from which the growth is formed.

If the growth is reabsorbed, as sometimes happens in young colts, lameness may be obviated and the eyesore at least is removed. If the growth is completed quickly, which is liable to happen where blistering is done in an adult horse, lameness subsides, because the joint involved becomes united by the deposit of bone, and when motion ceases friction subsides, pain disappears and the lameness due to pain is removed. A blister, therefore, should be applied with these effects in mind, and will not be likely to do any good if the effect is not caused, or needed. For instance, it is useless to blister repeatedly for spavin lameness, unless the animal is completely rested; for the blister can only do good by causing union among the bones involved, and such union (ankylosis) cannot take place during motion. For that reason we tie a horse up short for at least six weeks after firing and blistering the hock joint for spavin.

#### Importance of Rest

The veterinarian who succeeds in obtaining the longest rest for his patient has the best success in treating lameness. It may be added that firing and blistering, as a rule, do little good in the treatment of bony excrescences of colts, such as ringbones and spavins, as the continued growth of the bones prevents ankylosis. Firing is best done in adult horses. The firing and blistering of a ringbone of a fore pastern also fail, in most cases, as the fore foot carries much weight and the added concussion or motion offsets the effect of the treatment. It is impossible to rest the part properly.

Many horsemen err in the form of blister they use. Often an old formula from an antiquated book is compounded and it takes off "hair and hide, as slick as a whistle." It should not have such an effect. The bad effects commonly are caused by use of corrosive sublimate, turpentine and other caustics in the ointment or liquid used.

It is better to make up a simple blistering compound by melting three ounces of lard and then melting in that one-quarter ounce of yellow beeswax which has been cut into fine shavings. Into the combination stir one ounce of powdered Russian cantharides, while the mixture is hot; then pour it into a shallow pan and stir until it becomes cold. This blistering compound improves with age, if kept tightly covered in a Mason jar. To use it properly clip off the hair, wash the skin clean and dry it perfectly. Rub the blister in, a little at a time, for fifteen minutes by the watch; then smear more blister on the part and tie the horse up short in his stall so that he will be unable to bite or lick the part. Wash the blister off in forty-eight hours; then apply a little lard daily. Do not blister a horse in excessively hot or cold weather. Do not blister on the loins or high up on the hip. Never apply a blister after a poultice, or while the skin is irritated. Do not bandage a blistered surface.

#### WORDS, WORDS

There are two kinds of talkers, those who don't stop to think and those who don't think to stop.—Advance Advocate.

When a farmer has nothing much to do and intends to spend the day loafing around, he sometimes lies in bed until six o'clock in the morning.



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