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SLOBBERS

What is Slobbers?

Sometime around July of each year, on certain farms, horses can be seen salivating heavily. An owner may be very upset by the thick ropes of saliva hanging from the horse's mouth and the large pool of saliva on the floor, but the horse is not in any danger. This is a condition known as Slobbers, or slaframine poisoning, and is caused by grazing on pasture that are infected with *Rhizoctonia leguminicola*, or Black Patch. This fungus most commonly grows on clover pasture and hay, and produces the mild toxin slaframine. It is the slaframine that produces the excessive salivation. Some severely affected horses may show tearing, and mild diarrhea and colic.

The fungus grows more in wet warm weather and persists in affected hay for up to 10 months after baling. The clinical signs will begin within 3 hours of consuming the affected plants, and will continue for up to 3 days after access to the plants is removed.

How is Slobbers diagnosed?

There is no test for Slobbers. Diagnosis is by clinical signs. There is also no test currently available for testing pasture or hay for the presence of slaframine.



A horse with slobbers

What is the treatment for slobbers?

There is no treatment for Slobbers, but treatment is not necessary. Besides being very messy, Slobbers is not a concern. Removing the horse from the affected field will eliminate the signs.

Caution!

Although Slobbers is not a health concern, there are other serious diseases that also cause excessive salivation. Consumption of burdock, foxtail and raspberry canes can cause foreign object ulcers in the mouth that can be very painful and occasionally abscess. Other plants, such as marsh marigolds and buttercups, can cause salivation and painful ulcers. Some diseases, such as vesicular stomatitis, cause salivation, but make your horse very ill.

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