**CLIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT**

**Customer Name, Street Address, City, State, Zip code**

**Phone number, Alt. phone number, Fax number, e-mail address, web site**

**Atopic Dermatitis**

**Basics**

**Overview**

* Atopic dermatitis (AD) is an itchy skin disease of horses
* In most horses it is a disease requiring life-long therapy
* Symptomatic anti-itch treatment or allergen-specific immunotherapy (allergy shots) are the 2 choices

**Signs**

* Affected horses often itch on the face and legs
* Initially, many horses show seasonal itch, although it becomes all year round with time
* Self-trauma and secondary infections are common

**Causes**

* Most common allergens involved are storage mites, mold spores, and pollens

**Treatment**

**Appropriate Health Care**

* Allergen-specific immunotherapy (allergy shots) are the only specific treatment and the allergens should be chosen based on history and skin testing or serum testing for allergen-specific immunoglobulin E
* Alternatively, horses can be treated with symptomatic therapy, which will not change the allergy but will improve the itch

**Activity**

* General activity restrictions are not indicated
* In some horses with exclusive signs outdoors during a specific season may be kept and ridden indoors during that time

**Diet**

* Although diet constraints are not recommended in horses with environmentally induced AD, flax or linseed oil supplementation may be useful owing to its anti-inflammatory action

**Surgical Considerations**

* Surgery is not indicated for atopic horses

**Medications**

* Glucocorticoids are effective for the treatment of equine AD, but may be associated with some adverse effects
* Antihistamines can also be used effectively, notably hydroxyzine at 400–800 mg/horse twice daily
* The only specific treatment is allergen-specific immunotherapy

**Follow-Up**

**Patient Monitoring**

* As AD is a disease with waxing and waning clinical signs, symptomatic therapy should be adjusted to the patient’s current clinical signs on a regular basis
* The type of monitoring depends on the drugs used
* The dose and frequency of allergy shots needs to be adjusted based on the patient’s clinical response

**Possible Complications**

* Severe pruritus and self-trauma in severe chronic AD will make normal riding difficult
* Secondary bacterial infections may always occur
* Adverse effects also depend on medications used

**Expected Course and Prognosis**

* Spontaneous remission is rare with allergic disease; if left untreated, it frequently will slowly become more severe and extensive

**Key Points**

* Chronic disease with the frequent need for life-long treatment
* Symptomatic treatments as well as allergy shots need to be adjusted based on the horse’s clinical response



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