

# RAIN SCALD

my tried and tested remedy  
by Heike Mack-Behle

Summer, soaring temperatures, high humidity, rain – the perfect environment for rain scald (*dermatophilosis*) to develop on your donkeys.

Rain scald is a painful and contagious skin disease caused by an organism which behaves like both bacteria and fungi (*dermatophilus congolensis*).

**D**onkeys with sensitive skin (pink/non-pigmented, mature) are more susceptible to rain scald or rain rot, as it is sometimes referred to. However, any kind of equine can be affected if exposed to extreme moisture or rain for days. Damaged skin (from scratching at a tree, fly bites, prolonged wetting etc.) allows the organism to enter the epidermis which then becomes infected. It is very important to treat rain scald immediately, as a secondary bacterial infection may be present which can be even more resistant and difficult to treat.

**TIP:** Rain scald is contagious so be sure to disinfect any equipment used on the affected animal. Don't share any equipment (halter, brush etc.) with other equines. Thoroughly wash sponges, brushes and the like after every treatment. And don't forget to wash your own hands. Even though rain scald won't affect humans, you can inadvertently transfer the bug to other equines via your hands.

The treatment of a face like Tara's is usually painful for the donkey and no walk in the park. Helping donkeys for many years now, I would like to share my method with you; what and how it works for me and my best friends. If you are unsure or your donkey has a severe case of rain scald, make an appointment with your veterinarian and discuss treatment and medication.

## Step 1

Find a nice, shady spot, preferably undercover. Tie up your donkey with halter/collar around the neck. Don't use any equipment that may rub and irritate the infected skin. If your donkey is untrained use/create a narrow race, safe for you and the animal. Quiet donkeys like Tara feel more comfortable without being restrained.



## Step 2

'Quit-Itch' (local produce store or online) is a Broad Spectrum Antiseptic Lotion (bactericide/fungicide) and excellent product. I use it all the time.



Mix it with water in a little bowl and make lots and lots of foam with a new pot sponge (dispose after treatment).



These photos show the infected face of 'Tara'. She is a member of our 'Golden Oldies Club' and is over 40 years old. These scabs developed within a few days of having 41 degree temperatures with very high humidity last January.

Tara suffers from rain scald (mainly face) every summer but has a healthy skin and perfect coat during the rest of the year. In her case stabling doesn't help, as her face starts to flare up with the humidity.



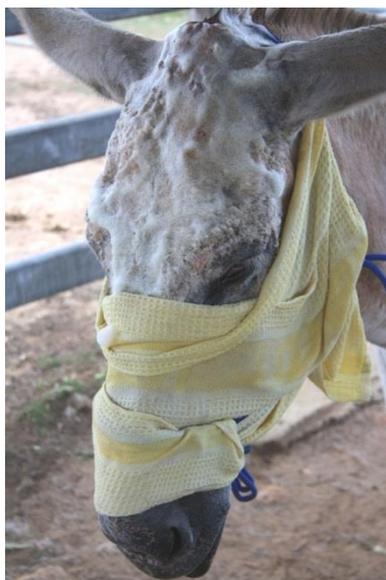


### Step 3

Take off the top layer of the firm foam and apply gently to affected areas.

Don't get too close to the eyes. Make sure the dissolving foam is not running into the ears, eyes or nostrils. I'm sure you will immediately know why or you may find out the hard way! Take your time and repeat this process again and again while talking softly and calmly to your donkey.

Make sure the crust layer gets soaked all the way down to the skin. The absorbed Iodine solution foam will soften the skin and loosen the scabs. You can treat the back of ears at the same time, if affected.



### Step 4

I'm sure you didn't know a donkey could have a facial! In a severe case like this it takes longer to loosen the scabs and more intensive soaking is required around the nose part.

Dampen a 100% cotton tea towel in a bigger bowl with a new solution (1:20) and wrap it around the face.

To keep the towel in place, use a loose rope halter. Tuck the tea towel under the halter so the halter is not directly touching the skin. Again, avoid the eyes and nostrils so the donkey doesn't get annoyed.



### Step 5

Now the fun starts.

For hygiene, wear disposable gloves from now on.

Remove all loose scabs with the help of the damp tea towel while the skin is still moist. Be very gentle and take your time! The soft scabs should come off easily now. Keep rinsing the towel during this process. Maybe another new mix is required. No pulling and picking if a few patches are not coming off. Do not risk cracking the skin to invite further bacterial infection – so there should be no bleeding.

In the photo you see a complete intact skin without any scabs left.

Immediately dry the face with soft tissues and get all moisture off. Be gentle, the skin is pink, super sensitive and sore now. It is very important to let the skin dry and expose it to fresh air, which is the enemy of this organism, for 10 minutes. Enough time to get a good cup of tea.

### Step 6

First put new gloves on. Now, in Tara's case and only on a face, I apply a thin layer of broad spectrum Anti-Fungal Cream (Clotrimazole from the pharmacy) where the scabs have been removed. Ask your vet if you're not sure.

After 5-10 minutes apply a light covering of Filta-Bac Crème. Make sure no moisture is underneath (moisture keeps the fungus happy). Don't forget to wash the rope halter and to collect and dispose of all skin patches you remove from the donkey.



Filta-Bac Crème is a sun-block and antibacterial skin protection which allows transpiration of the covered area.



## **Happy Face**

This is Tara 8 days later. I haven't touched her face at all during that time.

All you can see is the Filta-Bac coming off. NO scabs, NO sunburn and her hair is growing back.

This skin disease will re-occur while the weather is still very hot, humid and wet, but not as bad as the first outbreak. It's easy to manage when you stay on top of it.

Do not apply crème above the eyes if rain is expected shortly.

You may notice the tell-tale itchy and painful matted coat with bumps, blisters and flaky skin in other commonly-affected parts such as back, legs and heels. These are much easier to treat by applying undiluted Quit-Itch directly and massaging in, or use it as a shampoo. Malaseb (Chlorhexidine) is another good option if you prefer to shampoo your donkey.

It's quite a procedure but well worth it for the sake of the donkey's health, comfort and happiness.

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