

Three Yellows Powder - Herbal First Aid for the Trail Rider

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The Old Chinese adage “*Luck is when opportunity meets preparedness*” is one of my favorite sayings. As an avid trail rider and horse owner I have embraced this wisdom. For me preparedness comes in the form of a small herbal first aid kit tucked in my saddle bag.

A key item in my first aid kit is a small packet of the Chinese herbal formula Three Yellows Powder or *San Huang San*, as it is known in Chinese. Three Yellows Powder is well known to martial artists for its ability to treat sprains, strains and blunt force traumas.

A small packet fits easily into your pocket or saddlebag and is a must have for every stable and trailer first aid kit.

Three Yellows Powder is based on a classical Shaolin trauma formula, composed primarily of three cooling herbs all containing the word “*Huang*” or yellow in Chinese. *Huang qin* (Skullcap root), *Huang bai* (Phellodenron bark) and *Da huang* (Rhubarb) combine to reduce inflammation, disperse congealed blood, accumulated fluids and stop bleeding without causing stagnation. Use it anytime you would use ice. Think of Three Yellows Powder as an ice cube in a bag. Three Yellows Powder is easy to use. Simply mix it into a spreadable paste with water, Vaseline or even cooking oil and apply topically.

Many sports medicine specialists recommend ice packs for pulled muscles, sprains and contusions, and even with fractures that haven't broken the skin. Unfortunately ice has its draw backs. For one thing ice isn't always available when you are in the stable, or on the trail. Secondly, ice only temporally reduces inflammation. New research has show that prolonged use of ice actually increases the stagnation of blood and fluids, causes contraction of muscles and sinews and can actually slow healing.

Appropriate first aid management undertaken at the time of injury helps reduce the pain and discomfort caused by damaged tissue and inflammation, prevents further injury,

minimizes scar tissue formation, and will ultimately speed up recovery.

Traditional uses of formulas like Three Yellows Powder go back to the wars and conflicts of ancient China, evolving out of triage on the battlefield. Battlefield medicine consisted of powders, liniments and salves for stopping, bleeding, preventing infections and healing wounds.

The Shaolin monastery - a group of warrior, monk, doctors were the trusted preservers of these traditions. Remember David Carradine as “*Kuai Chang Caine*”, (Grasshopper) in the Kung Fu television series from the 1970's. He was a Shaolin monk. Some of the oldest writings from the Shaolin monastery include secret formulas designed to treat all manner of injuries from swords, arrows, blows, fractures and sprains. Known as *die da* formulations or injury due to fall and strike, these prescriptions predate what we now call Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). These time tested formulas and concepts now directly benefit modern horses and riders.

Ace is a modern horse who uses Three Yellows Powder. Recently, Ace and his rider took a nasty spill during an endurance race. Ace bruised his stifle and was tender and

hot to the touch that evening. A paste made of Three Yellows Powder was applied to the entire area and by morning all signs of heat and tenderness were resolved. Ace and his owner utilize Chinese herbal formulas as part of their regular training program.

Luckily, Chinese formulas like Three Yellows Powder can prepare us for the inevitable kicks, bites, falls, sprains and strains that are a part of everyday horse ownership.

