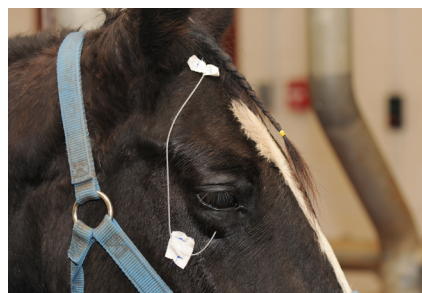


Equine Subpalpebral Lavage Line FAQs

UTCVM OPHTHALMOLOGY

What is an SPL?

A subpalpebral lavage system (SPL) is a long silicone tube that is inserted into either the upper or lower eyelid and secured to the skin to deliver liquid medication onto the surface of the cornea. The tubing is typically fastened to the mane with the entry port close to the horse's withers.



The lavage line is sutured onto the horse's face to keep it from moving around. It is inserted into either the upper or lower eyelid to dispense the medication onto the surface of the eye.



The lavage line is weaved through the horse's mane with the injection port close to the withers.

liquid medications frequently, if a horse is fractious due to pain or behavior, or if the globe is very fragile due to a deep ulcer or recent surgery.

How does the medication get to the eye?

There are two methods of allowing the medication to reach the eye. It is important that you ask your veterinarian which method you will be using with your horse.

What kind of complications can occur?

The most common complication is a hole or tear in the line. If there is a tear you need the following supplies: clean scissors, a 20 gauge catheter, and tape. Follow these instructions:

- 1) Wash hands prior to the repair,
- 2) cut the SPL cleanly on both sides,
- 3) insert the catheter into one side of the SPL until the tubing is halfway down the catheter (tip: pull the sharp metal stylet back just a tiny bit so that it does not puncture the tubing),
- 4) cut off the plastic colored portion of the catheter (usually pink),
- 5) slide the other half of the catheter into the second side of the SPL tubing,

Another possible complication is loss of the sutures holding the line secure to the face. This can be easily repaired by a veterinarian. Until you can make this appointment it might be helpful to try gluing the tape to the face with superglue or securing the line to a breakaway halter with some tape.

Please call your veterinarian if you have any questions or concerns about your horse's SPL.

- 1) **Air method:** Each medication is pushed separately through the tubing by an air bolus slowly. Thus, you inject the medication followed by 2-3 mls of air slowly (which empties the line), wait at least 5 minutes, then administer the next medication, and repeat until all medications are completed.



A syringe is used to administer the medication through the port at the end of the lavage line without needing to touch the horse's eye or head.

- 2) **Stacking method:** Medications can be stacked into the line without any air between them. After giving each medication you wait at least 5 minutes before the next, but no air is administered. Each medication is administered through the tubing by dosing the next medication, like dominos.

How do I care for an SPL?

Clean the injection cap (the end of the catheter) prior to medication administration with an alcohol swab. Change the injection cap every 5 days or sooner if it becomes visibly soiled with manure or mud. Ensure that the sutures holding the SPL tubing in place are intact to prevent the line from shifting or getting caught on things. Check the line for tears daily to make sure no medications are dripping onto the skin from the line. Monitor the site that the tube enters the eyelid for swelling, heat, pain, and/or yellow discharge.

How do I prevent the SPL tube from being damaged?

Most horses are not bothered by the line and do not try to traumatize it. Each horse will have different exercise restrictions and requirements for eye protection depending on their ocular condition; speak to your veterinarian about these restrictions. You can protect the line on the face with a fly mask or hard protective mask. A "neck sleazy" can also be used to protect the tubing along the neck from the cold in temperatures below freezing.

- 6) and lastly, place tape over the site to keep it secure.

For more information, please enter "AAEP SPL" into your internet search engine and a document about SPLs will come up (dated Jan 2019). Scroll down to Fig. 9 for SPL repair photos. Or type in "UTCVM SPL repair" into the YouTube search bar to find a video demonstration.