



Colic Examination



Giving Mineral Oil through a nasogastric tube.



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COLIC



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General information:

Colic is a general term that refers to abdominal pain. It has many causes. Colic can be mild or severe. The more serious episodes require surgery to correct. All horse owners should know the signs of colic:

- Decreased or no appetite
- Lethargy
- Lying down
- Rolling
- Pawing
- Sweating / trembling
- Looks at or biting at their sides
- Not passing normal amounts of manure

Every case of colic should be taken seriously. It can be difficult to tell the mild ones from the potentially serious cases in the early stages.

What to do:

-Remove any feed in the horse's pen. Separate the horse if it is with other horses.

-Call your veterinarian. If your horse is insured you should contact the insurance company and alert them that you are taking your horse to the vet.

-Closely monitor the horse. Watch for any manure production, water intake and the overall attitude of the horse.

What not to do:

-Do not give any drugs/home remedies to the horse without first consulting with your vet. The drugs can mask the symptoms of problems or cause other problems (like abscesses or kidney damage in a horse that is dehydrated).

-Do not try to give your horse oil. Unless a tube is passed by your vet some of the oil you give will go into your horse's lungs which can cause pneumonia.

-Do not pass anything (hand, hose, etc) into the horse's rectum. The tissue of the rectum is very thin and you can easily tear the rectum causing peritonitis and death of the horse. Wait for your veterinarian to do it properly with the horse sedated. Enemas in adult horses do not work since there is over 100 feet of small colon behind where the blockages occur.

Prevention of colic:

Nothing can prevent colic, but there are some things you can do to decrease your chances of having it.

- Try to keep to a routine with regards to feeding, exercise and turnout. If you change feed, do it gradually over 5-7 days.

- Regular dental care (1-2 times yearly) allows the horse to properly chew their food and prevents impaction colics.

-Feed horses in a feeder or tub with rubber mats underneath to prevent sand ingestion. Feed psyllium to

prevent sand accumulation once a day for 7 days out of every month.

-All horses should have access to a white salt block or a scoop of electrolytes can be added to their daily feed. This encourages them to drink more water, especially when the weather changes.

-Regular parasite control is also critical. Foals should be started on a de-worming protocol at 2 months of age. Adult horses should be on a regular deworming protocol. Please refer to the de-worming handout for additional details.

-Always check the feed before giving it to your horse. If there are suspicious plants or mold do not feed the hay or grain.

-Do not feed more than 50% alfalfa to prevent enterolith (stone in the intestinal tract) formation.

-Closely monitor horses that are stressed (for whatever the reason, possibly show horses traveling to shows).

-Closely monitor horses that have coliced in the past. Some horses need to be placed on anti-ulcer medication. Some do better when you take your hay with you to the shows. Talk with your veterinarian about these horses to develop a plan specific to your horse.