



AAEP American Association
of Equine Practitioners

Horse Health Education

COLIC

Minimizing its Incidence
and Impact in Your Horse

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

OVERVIEW

- Colic is the number one killer of horses, but most cases of colic are mild and resolve with simple medical treatment.
- Colic is not a disease; it is merely a symptom of disease.

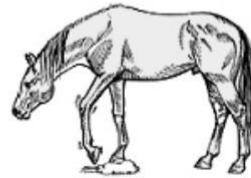
myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

RECOGNIZING COLIC

- Turning the head toward the flank
- Pawing
- Kicking or biting at the belly
- Stretching out
- Repeatedly lying down
- Repeated rolling
- Sitting in a dog-like position



myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

RECOGNIZING COLIC

- Holding head in an unusual position
- Leaving food
- Lack of bowel movements
- Reduced or absent digestive sounds
- Inappropriate sweating



myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

RECOGNIZING COLIC

- Rapid breathing and/or flared nostrils
- Elevated pulse rate (greater than 50 beats per minute)
- Depression
- Lip curling unrelated to sexual interest

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

WHAT TO DO

- Call your veterinarian
- Remove all food from the horse, leaving some water
- Keep the horse in an area where it can be watched
- Allow rest or walk the horse around if it is continually rolling or in danger of hurting itself
- Always continue observation

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Specific signs of colic, and their severity
- Pulse or heart rate
- Respiratory rate
- Rectal temperature
- Color of the gums
- Moistness of the gums



myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Capillary refill time
(normal is 1-2 seconds)
- Digestive sounds (if any)
- Bowel movements
- Recent changes (diet, exercise, etc.)
- Medical history

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

THINGS TO AVOID

- **Passing any kind of tube into the horse's stomach**
- **Giving the horse any substance by mouth, particularly liquids**
- **Inserting anything into the horse's rectum**
- **Giving any intravenous injections**

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

VETERINARY EVALUATION

- **Accurate history (may include feeding and deworming programs, vaccination schedule, etc.)**
- **Review of your observations**
- **Complete physical examination (vital signs and intestinal sounds)**
- **Rectal palpation**
- **Passage of a nasogastric (stomach) tube**

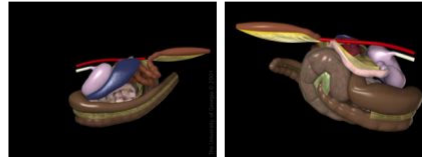
myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

VETERINARY EVALUATION

- **Collection of abdominal fluid** (peritoneal or “belly” tap)
- **Blood tests**
- **Evaluation of the response to treatment**

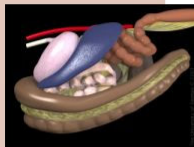


myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

CLASSIFYING COLIC



1. **Intestinal Dysfunction.** The most common category, includes spasms, gas distention, impaction and decreased motility. Responds well to medical treatment.
2. **Intestinal Accidents.** These occur less frequently and include twists and entrapments. This category almost always requires surgery.

myHorseMatters.com



CLASSIFYING COLIC



- 3. Inflammation or Ulceration.** This category is named according to the bowel segment involved. Caused by stress, medications, infection and parasites. Medical treatment is generally required.



TREATMENT

- **Pain-relievers (analgesics or sedatives)**
- **Fluid therapy by either nasogastric or intravenously**
- **Laxatives (mineral oil)**
- **Enema**
- **Surgery**



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

PREVENTION



- Establish a set daily routine
- Feed a high-quality diet (roughage)
- Limit the amount of grain-based feeds
- Divide the daily concentrate ration
- Parasite control program
- Provide exercise or daily turnout

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

PREVENTION

- Make any changes to the diet gradual
- Provide fresh, clean water
- Avoid giving your horse medications unless prescribed by your vet
- Check hay, bedding, pasture and environment for potentially toxic substances
- Avoid putting feed on the ground

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

PREVENTION

- Reduce stress (change in environment)
- Pay special attention to animals when transporting
- Observe foaling mares (pre- and post-foaling)
- Pay particular attention to horses with previous bouts of colic
- Maintain accurate records

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

SUMMARY

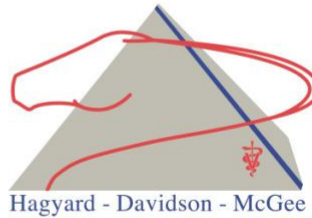
- The key to minimizing colic is good management. To minimize colic impact, identify the problem early and call your veterinarian immediately.
- Treat every incident of colic as potentially serious and never jeopardize your horse's health for the sake of a few dollars.

myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

Photos courtesy of
The Glass Horse, LLC and
Hagyard-Davidson-McGee Associates, PLLC



myHorseMatters.com



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: COLIC

The AAEP would like to thank our
Educational Partners for their support of the
AAEP's Owner Education Programs



Bayer



Boehringer
Ingelheim



Animal Health



Purina Mills, LLC



Nutrena™



EQUUS

myHorseMatters.com



For more horse health information,
visit our Web site:

myHorseMatters.com