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COLIC

Just because colic is a common condition, it doesn't mean that it's not serious.

Another name for colic is gut pain. It can be caused by something as simple as poor teeth or as serious as a twisted bowel. Regardless of the cause colic is an emergency condition.

Common, and usually preventable, causes of colic are: worms, sudden changes in the diet, stress, sandy or poor pastures and bad teeth (which don't grind and digest feed properly). More serious but less well understood colics involve twisted bowels, blockages, telescoping of intestines or ruptures.

When a horse first appears colicky it's difficult to tell if the cause is simple or serious: an apparently mild colic can rapidly become life threatening. So when do you call the vet?

A mildly distressed horse (which looks at its side and paws occasionally) can be watched for 30 minutes. If there is absolutely no improvement at all after this time veterinary attention is recommended. Of course, if the colic worsens within half an hour, don't wait.

Severe pain is indicated by pawing, sweating and rolling. Sometimes a horse attempts to urinate frequently and stretches or leans back. Abdominal rumblings and flatulence can characterise colic also.

Serious colics are unpredictable, but it's easy to prevent the common causes of colic with regular drenching and tooth care. Avoid upsetting a horse and if a change of diet is necessary, make it gradually.

Some vets suggest annual paraffin drenches, particularly for horses on sandy pastures, alternatively the feeding of "Sandlube" or psyllium husks to prevent the accumulation of sand in the intestines. Wetting down of hay and hard feeds can also help to prevent any impactions forming. Always ensure the horse has ready access to fresh, clean water.

If there are any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

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