



## What is an Emergency?

### What is Normal?

#### Normals: Know your horse's baselines

- Temperature: 99.5°F to 101.5°F.
- Pulse: 30-40 beats per minute.
- Respiration: 8-16 breaths per minute.
- Mucous membrane color: color of gum tissue in the mouth. Normal is pink and moist.
- CRT (capillary refill time): time it takes for color to return to gum tissue adjacent to the teeth after pressing and releasing your thumb; usually less than 2 seconds. Do not use the skin-pinch-test, it is not reliable in horses.
- GI Motility (gastrointestinal) – stethoscope or ear to flank, on both sides – all four quadrants. 3-4 gut sounds per minute.
- Movement – is your horse walking or trotting normally? Can he turn his head easily in all directions?
- Water and food consumption: horses may drink 8-20 gallons of water/day.
- Manure – horses may defecate every 3-4 hours.
- Manure - what is normal consistency for your horse's manure?

What is your horse's normal temperature? (In winter?) (In summer?)

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What is the address where your horse is located?

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Is anyone else authorized with the veterinarian to request an appointment (Emergency or regular appointments).

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*Make sure to let Cleary Lake Veterinary Hospital know who else is authorized & their contact information.*

Do you have a trailer to transport your horse if needed? If not is there someone you can ask for help? A local rental service?

**Pictures can often help the doctor prepare equipment. Take pictures with a cell phone and send to the doctor upon request.**

## Most Common Emergencies

### Colic

#### Signs of colic

- Not eating.
- Pawing/rolling.
- Stretching as if to urinate.
- Biting at sides
- Lack of manure.
- Lack of GI motility.
- Raising lip.
- Grinding teeth.
- Heart rate and respiration rate may be increased.
- Temperature usually normal or low.

#### What to do if you think your horse is colicking.

- Check **T**emperature, **P**ulse, and **R**espiration (TPR)
- Take food away.
- Call your vet ASAP.
- Handwalk to prevent rolling.

#### What can you do to prevent your horse from colicking?

- Have a regular feeding program.
- Have a schedule for deworming your horse as recommended by your veterinarian based on fecal egg count.
- Sand control.
- Routine dental examinations (impaction colics).
- Have clean, ice-free water available at all times.

### Lacerations

#### Signs

- Obvious! The temp, heart rate and respiration may be elevated in severe cases. The mucous membranes may be pale due to excessive bleeding.

#### Plan – what to do

- Check Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration (TPR)
- If possible, clean the wound and stop the bleeding with a pressure wrap. (If the wound bleeds through the wrap place an additional wrap over the first. Do not remove the first wrap.
- **Do not apply any ointment or topical treatments** until you talk to your vet – if it needs suturing, we don't want any ointments applied to it.
- Keep horse calm, bring in buddy horse, etc.

#### Prevention

Check out your horse's environment – door latches, tin on the barn, gates, fencing, nails sticking out of boards

## **Choke (Esophageal impaction)**

### Signs

- Food coming out of nose.
- Coughing.
- Won't eat.
- Pawing, rolling, rubbing head/nose – colic-like symptoms.
- Temp is usually normal, or slightly elevated.

### Plan

- Call your vet ASAP.
- Check a TPR and other vital signs
- Massage throat/esophagus.
- Offer water.
- Handwalk.

### Prevention

- Good dentistry.
- Discourage rapid eating (wolfing down food!) with a large rock in feeder.
- Wet down the feed, or modify diet as recommended by your veterinarian.

## **Fever**

### Signs

- Not eating or drinking.
- Moving slowly/lethargic.
- Less manure or dry manure.
- Swollen lymph nodes.
- Pulse and respiration is often elevated.
- Mucous membranes may be pale.
- Elevated temp. (102.0F or higher)

### Plan

- Check Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration (TPR)
- Call your vet ASAP.
- Cold hose his legs – if fever is from overheating.

### Prevention/causes

- Viral infection – vaccinate to prevent viral diseases.
- Bacterial infections
- Cellulitis
- Infection from a wound.
- Strangles.
- Other.

## Lameness/fractures/tying up

### Signs

- Won't move or limping.
- Pulse and respiration may be elevated.
- Temp may be normal or slightly elevated.
- May have increased pulses in his feet.

### Plan

- Check Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration (TPR)
- Determine which limb(s) are involved.
- Check feet for foreign object and for heat. (**DO NOT** remove a foreign object unless directed by your veterinarian).
- Check for swelling, etc.
- If severe, call your vet ASAP.

### Causes

- Foot abscess
- Bowed tendon
- Fracture
- Sprain
- Puncture
- Infection
- Laminitis (also called "Founder")
- Tying up (Muscle cramping making it impossible to move)

## Eye Injuries

### Signs

- Squinting/tearing eye.
- Swollen eyelid.
- Eye is cloudy or milky looking.

### Plan

- Check Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration (TPR)
- Call your vet ASAP – all eye problems are considered an emergency, unless proven otherwise.
- Braid your horse's forelock to keep it out of the eyes.
- Do not put any medications in the eye prior to consulting your vet. Some medications can inhibit healing and complicate the situation.
- If possible put horse in an area out of wind and sunlight.

### Causes/prevention

- Pink skinned horses are more sensitive to eye problems.
- Fly masks.

## **Hives and Heaves (Allergies)**

### **Signs**

- Respiratory distress (Heaves); increased respiration, pulse and sometimes elevated temperature.
- Hives all over or localized areas, or swelling of the muzzle or face. Temp and respiration may be increased. May be itchy.

### **Plan**

- Check Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration (TPR)
- Call your vet for further instructions.

### **Prevention/causes.**

- Poor ventilation in barn.
- Round bales or moldy hay. (Heaves)
- Seasonal allergies. (Hives or Heaves.)
- New bedding. (Hives or Heaves.)
- Weed contaminated hay. (Hives)

## **Diarrhea**

### **Signs**

- Loose stool.
- No stool evident.
- Wet tail.

### **Plan**

- Check Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration (TPR)
- Call your vet.

### **Causes/prevention.**

- Feed changes – especially concerning rich foods (Such as rich spring pasture).
- Parasites.
- Sand.
- Stress.
- Infection.

## **Dystocia – Difficult birth. Call your vet ASAP.**

- \*If foal is not out or mare is not making progress giving birth within 15 minutes of the mares water breaking.
- \*Make sure your trailer is hooked up and ready to go.
- \*This is an emergency situation and you must act very quickly.

## Neurologic or down horse.

### Signs

- Can't get up.
- Wobbly (ataxic)
- Seizing.
- Shaking head.
- Muscle tremors (HYPP)
- Cast in stall

### Plan

- Call your vet ASAP.
- Check Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration (TPR), unless your horse is seizing or cast. (Wait until horse is standing to do TPR)
- Check for fractured or injured limbs.
- Attempt to get horse to rise. (Provide stable footing).
- Roll horse if necessary – if cast in stall

### Causes/prevention.

- Old horse weakness, muscle wasting, arthritis.
- EPM, West Nile virus, spinal injuries.
- HYPP, muscle disorders.
- Colic.
- Prevent your horse from casting himself by banking bedding, using walls with friction, etc.

## Now What?

### Have an action plan.

- Stay calm! No matter what emergency you face in the future, mentally rehearse the steps you will take to avoid letting panic take control.
- Make sure the number you leave is a number where you can be reached.
- Have your veterinarian's numbers handy, including how he/she can be reached after hours.
- Have a few friends or neighbors lined up to help.
- Prepare a first aid kit and store it in a clean, dry place, and most importantly, an accessible place. Make sure everyone in the barn knows where it is.

### Your first aid kit.

It can be simple or elaborate, but there are some essential items. Here is a short list to get your kit started:

- Thermometer.
- Flashlight and spare batteries.
- Cotton roll.
- Scissors.
- Gauze pads.
- Gauze rolls.
- Clean towels/rags.
- Stethoscope.
- Bute or Flunixinamine (*Prescription medications - Consult your veterinarian before giving and always take your horse's temperature before giving any medication*)
- Chlorhexidine ointment.
- Duct tape.
- Tamed iodine or wound flush.
- KY jelly.
- Baby Diapers (make great bandages for hooves)
- Bolt cutter, Wire cutter

Consult your veterinarian for further recommendations.