

# Colic

## What is Colic?

**Colic is a term that really just means abdominal pain, which mostly comes from the gastrointestinal tract. Occasionally, the pain can be caused by problems in the urinary tract or reproductive organs.**

Some forms of colic are mild and go away very quickly with very little intervention. Other forms are far more serious and can be life-threatening so, speaking to your vet as soon as possible is incredibly important. They will be able to diagnose whether the pain your horse is experiencing is mild and will resolve quickly or if the situation is more serious.

## How Do You Know It's Colic?

No two cases of colic are the same and there is a large variety of signs to look out for:

- Restlessness
- Loss of appetite
- Flank watching
- Rolling
- Pawing at the ground
- Lying flat out
- Curling top lip
- Sweating
- Dog sitting
- Belly kicking
- Tooth grinding
- Increased breathing rate
- Stretching

You know your horse best so, if you notice he/she is displaying any of these signs, call your vet immediately for a consult.



## Types of Colic

- Spasmodic Colic
  - This is when the bowel contracts in an abnormal way, creating spasms (cramps) that cause pain. This is the most common type of colic.
- Impaction Colic
  - This type of colic is an obstruction of the bowel and is also fairly common. It can generally be cleared easily with fluids and electrolytes. On rare occasions, if very severe, surgery may be needed.
- Displacement/Strangulation and Torsion Colic
  - The early stages of this type can look like spasmodic or impaction colic but is much more serious. Sections of the bowel can get out of position and, in some cases, become strangulated or twisted.



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## How Does the Vet Diagnose?

It is really important to get a diagnosis as quickly as possible.

Your vet will take a full history of your horse, including age, previous colic history, last time he/she passed dung etc.

Next the vet will physically examine your horse. This may include rectal examination, listening to stomach sounds, manipulation, a stomach tube, fluid samples and ultrasounds.

A thorough examination will help the vet determine which kind of colic it is and what course of treatment.

## What is the Treatment?

Depending on which type of colic your horse has, your vet will recommend the best treatment.

This may be pain killers, fluids and electrolytes, but could also be surgery. Your vet will help you make the right decision for your horse.

Due to the seriousness of colic, it is really important to call your vet back if there is not a good and rapid response to the treatment.



## Can Colic Be Prevented?

You can never completely prevent your horse from getting colic. Even the best managed horses can be effected.

Good health management can help reduce the risk though.

- Good dental health
- A good worming programme
- A fibre-rich diet
- Avoiding sudden changes in diet
- Avoiding sudden management changes

We can help you keep on top of these. Give us a call for a chat about good health management.