



COLIC

The term colic is an umbrella term for anything that causes abdominal pain the horse. Colic varies in severity but ultimately the clinical signs are reflective of the severity of the condition in combination with pain threshold of your horse

The history, severity of the clinical signs and the physical examination findings alongside any diagnostic tests performed help determine the cause of colic. A survey from Nottingham University indicated that the cause of colic was unknown in 25% of cases and of those 80% managed to respond to medical management alone. On physical exam high heart rates may be a reflection of cardiovascular compromise, toxemia and pain.

So what different types of colic are there? We mainly tend to split causes of colic into medical and surgical colic.

Medical Colics

- spasmodic colic
- infection & inflammation
- peritonitis
- impactions
- some displacements
- relating to other organ systems – testicular torsion or ovarian pain for example

Surgical colic can be defined as a cause of colic that does not resolve after medical treatment or is indicated from clinical exam

- gut torsions
- intussusception (gut telescoping into itself)
- blockages from impaction or obstruction
- some displacements

These are more severe and often require referral to a hospital for either surgery or more intensive management.

The majority of colic's we treat in first opinion practice are simple spasmodic colics – this refers to the intestines becoming hypermotile, which is what causes abdominal pain. Your vet is likely to give your horse injections of pain relief and anti-spasmodic drugs to treat the condition. Spasmodic colic can be spontaneous but sometimes it can occur due to a management change such as a new field of grass, sudden cold water or change in diet which is why it is best to take precautions when changing a horse's diet, gradually so that their body is able to cope with the change.

So what if it is not a simple spasmodic colic?

Sometimes horses don't always respond to first line treatment or the clinical exam indicates that the cause is more serious – such as reduced number of droppings, colour of the gums or absence of gut sounds. It is at this stage the vet may do further diagnostics such as a rectal exam or passing a stomach tube. If the cause is an impaction, then with multiple treatments with fluids via a stomach tube can be enough to ease the impaction, but some cases need referral to hospital for further treatment. However if we are unable to control your horse's pain, or the clinical signs worsen then this can indicate a more serious cause of the colic and possibly a poorer prognosis and the need for further treatment or surgery or euthanasia.

As much as we don't like to discuss finances, this is where having your horse insured for injury and illness is very important. With referral costs for a medical colic being around £1500 - £5000 and a surgical colic being around £5000-£8000 it is important to have a financial option in the unfortunate event that your horse may need to go to a hospital for treatment. Also worth thinking ahead for transportation requirements if needed.

Article written by Kitty Jenkins BVSc, MRCVS

Please do not hesitate to call us on 01208 76403. Office hours 8.30am-5-30pm Mon-Fri and 8.30am-12pm Saturday and we have vets available 24 hours a day.



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WELCOME TO OUR NEW TEAM MEMBER

Louise has recently joined the team as the new practice manager, having spent years in the automotive industry looking after a different kind of horsepower; Louise brings a wealth of leadership and management experience, along with a passion for our farming and equine community. Louise's other loves are; Chocolate, Netball and her pigs! I'm sure you will all be very welcoming to her!

RAINSCALD/MUDFEVER

This is a condition that affects the skin of the horse and normally occurs during autumn and winter months. The back and flanks are the most common areas to be affected. A bacteria called *Dermatophilus congolensis* causes scabs/infection and can spread to other horses through contact. Mud fever, which occurs most commonly in horses and ponies kept or exercised outdoors in wet and muddy conditions, is a similar condition that affects the legs.

SOME COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- Scabs forming, with tufts of hair attached.
- Puss can be under the scabs.
- Scabs can be very sore.
- Patches of hair loss maybe visible.
- Sticky secretion around scabs.

TREATMENT:

- Remove horse from wet muddy conditions if possible.
- Remove loose scabs, remember this can spread.
- May need to clip the area.
- Remove as many scabs as possible then wash the area with an antibacterial wash solution for seven to ten days. Dry the skin thoroughly after each wash.
- Keep the skin dry throughout treatment, use light-weight rug if no stable available.
- Antibiotic maybe needed to treat some severe cases.
- Antibacterial creams

HOW TO PREVENT RAINSCALD

- Good stable management.
- To the best of your ability protect your horse from rain and mud.
- Do not share tack and equipment.
- Keep tack, numnahs etc clean and dry and ensure horse is dry before riding.
- Ensure to treat all affected horses as this is highly contagious and spreads.
- Once a horse has suffered a bout of rainscald/mud fever it is likely that this may reoccur when the weather turns wet and muddy so keep vigilant and do what you can to protect your horse from any reoccurrence.



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