



Lilydale Clinic

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Colic

Colic is the name we use when a horse has abdominal (belly) pain. It is most commonly related to an upset in the digestive (gastrointestinal) system but can also be related to infection or disease of another organ such as the kidneys. Colic is relatively common in horses due to their complicated gastrointestinal tract and is something that every horse owner should know about.

Signs of colic include:

- Rolling repeatedly and getting up and down
- Pawing at the ground
- Looking at the stomach (flank watching)
- Lying down and not wanting to get up
- Not eating
- Kicking at the belly with the hind legs

If you see these signs it is a good idea to walk your horse around and try to prevent them from lying down and rolling. If the signs do not resolve in 5-10 minutes it is essential that you call a vet immediately as your horse is in pain and colic can be fatal if left untreated.

Causes of colic are varied and include:

- Spasmodic colic (gut cramping which may be induced by a change in diet, parasites, dehydration, stress etc).
- Impaction colic – this is where there is some faeces lodged in the large intestine
- Infection – either diarrhoea or an infection in the abdominal cavity (peritonitis)
- Abdominal accident such as a twisted or displaced bowel
- Problems with other organs for eg a blocked bladder (unable to pass urine)

Due to the large number of possible causes it is essential you seek vet advice ASAP. Whilst you are waiting for the vet to arrive it is a good idea to keep the horse moving and walking around to prevent them lying down and rolling. Walking can also take their mind off the pain. Do not administer any medications unless your vet tells you to.

Depending on the cause of colic your vet will administer pain relief and may need to perform tests such as a rectal exam, blood test and may wish to pass a stomach tube to perform a drench in case of impaction. If your horse is diagnosed with a twisted bowel they may need surgery in order to recover from the colic.

If your horse shows signs of colic, or you have any further questions, please call the clinic on 9739 5244 .