



Quality and Concern in Equine Practice
 Serving Colorado Springs and Southern Colorado

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Colorado Equine Veterinary Services,
A full-service, equine wellness, critical care and ambulatory practice.

- ◆ General Medical
- ◆ Preventive Medicine
- ◆ Diagnostic Exams
- ◆ Reproductive
- ◆ Minor Surgery
- ◆ Lameness Exams
- ◆ Complementary Medicine

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Recognizing Possible Problems

The horse's natural behavior, the flight-or-fight response, the herd instinct, and its unquenchable natural curiosity, make the horse accident prone.

The most common emergencies are cuts, lacerations, bruises and abrasions.

Owning a horse, you may also face colic, foaling difficulties, acute lameness, seizures, and illness.

As a horse owner, it is helpful to know how to recognize signs of possible problems, how to

If your horse shows signs of violent pain, call your Veterinarian!

safely stabilize your horse, and when to call your veterinarian. The key is to be

prepared. Horses exhibiting violent pain often have a serious problem.

If your horse shows signs of violent pain call your veterinarian!

In a developing emergency, symptoms may be subtle and easy to miss, so observe your horse carefully.

Consult with your veterinarian if in doubt.

Signs of Possible Problems

- Not drinking water
- A horse that's "off feed"
- Looking at the flank
- Any sign of distress, anxiety, or discomfort
- Lying down and getting up carefully
- Appears lifeless, drooping head, depressed
- Weight loss
- Unable to gain weight regardless of change in diet
- Decreased appetite
- Watery diarrhea
- Absence of gut sounds
- "Tying up" - a form of muscle cramps that range in severity from mild stiffness to life-threatening

A check of your horse's vital signs will help confirm your suspicions.

Signs of oncoming Lameness

- Head-bobbing
- Reluctance to move
- Odd stance
- Pain
- Unwillingness to rise or move

Temperature, Pulse, Respiration are Key Indicators
See page 2

Vital Signs - Key indicators of your horse's health. Ask your veterinarian to help you learn to assess them.

	Normal	How to Assess	When to Be Concerned
Heart rate (beats per min.)	30-42 beats per minute	Take pulse where the facial artery passes under the lower jaw. Using two fingers, locate the artery, count number of pulses for 15 seconds, multiply by 4 to obtain pulse rate.	Pulse rate sustained over 60 bpm when horse is cooled down and calm.
Respiratory rate (breaths per min.)	20 to 30 breaths per minute.	When listening to the lungs, most noises should be heard over a 3 to 4 inch section of chest wall. Place a stethoscope 5 inches behind and 7 inches above the elbow. You should hear gentle blowing sounds, similar to someone blowing on a hot drink. Listen for unimpeded airflow.	Signs of congestion: Loud sounds heard over a large chest area. Bubbling sounds, similar to someone blowing through a straw into a liquid • A high-pitched squeak • Silence
Temperature (degrees Fahrenheit)	99.5 to 101.5 degrees F.	Lubricate an equine thermometer, partially insert into horse's rectum, tilted slightly. Hold for a full minute, wipe clean and read.	Temperatures over 103' F indicate a serious disorder, contact your veterinarian immediately.
Mucous membranes (gums, nostrils)	Pale pink		Bright red, white, or bluish-purple
Capillary refill time	1 to 2 seconds	Briefly press a thumb against your horse's gums. Gums should turn white, then pink, in no more than 2 seconds.	over 5 seconds
Hydration	After "pinch test", the skin flattens immediately.	Pinch Test - pinch your horse's neck pulling up, skin should flatten immediately.	If the skin stays "tenting", the horse may be dehydrated.
Gut sounds	You should hear a lot of gurgle noises.	Listen in the area behind ribcage.	Be concerned if you <u>do not</u> hear anything.
Feces	Small, firm fecal balls.	Watch for sand or parasite larva.	about sand colic
Pain level in stomach	None	Any sign of abdominal pain	about sand colic