

NORMAL EQUINE VALUES

Evaluate your horse while healthy so you know his/her normals

Temperature: 99.5 to 101.5

Pulse (Heart Rate)

Adult 28 - 40 beats per minute (bpm)

Newborn Foal 80 - 120 bpm

Foal 60 - 80 bpm

Yearling 40 - 60 bpm

Respiratory Rate 8 – 16 breaths per minute

Mucous Membranes (gums): Color pink, Moist Capillary Refill less than 2 seconds

Gut Sounds: present in all quadrants of abdomen

To determine the above values:

Temperature- use a digital or large animal thermometer rectally for the time recommended on the thermometer. The temperature may be falsely elevated by environmental heat or exercise. An abnormally low temperature (less than 98.5) may indicate shock or hypothermia and an abnormally elevated temperature (greater than 102) may result from infection, inflammation, pain or overexertion.

Pulse (Heart Rate)- Place your stethoscope or your hand against the horse's chest behind the left elbow and count the number of heart beats per minute. The pulse can be obtained from several other places, including the angle of the jaw, beneath the base of the tail, behind the carpus or along the back of the pastern. The heart rate may be elevated by many factors, including exercise, stress, pain or shock.

Respiratory Rate- Count the rise and falls of the horse's chest or watch the nostrils flare.

Mucous Membranes- Evaluated by looking at the horse's gums (the inside of a mare's lips or her vulva can also be used for color). Gums should be moist and slippery to the touch, not dry and tacky which may indicate dehydration. Abnormal gum colors are white, brick red or purplish blue and your veterinarian should be notified immediately if these colors are noted. To determine capillary refill, push on the gum with your finger and note how long until the color returns. It should return almost immediately.

Gut Sounds- Place your stethoscope or your ear against the horse's flank area and listen both high and low on both sides. You should hear several rumbles per minute in all 4 quadrants. Complete silence is a warning sign especially when accompanied with signs of colic.

Common Veterinary Emergencies - What to Do and When to Call the Vet

Colic

*Most common equine veterinary emergency.

*Term means abdominal pain and can be caused by abnormality in any abdominal organ (kidneys, liver, intestines, reproductive organs, etc.) Most commonly used to refer to intestinal pain.

*Pain can result from gas distention, food/fecal impaction, sand impaction, strangulation of bowel by lipoma/twist, loss of blood supply (parasites, thromboembolism, ulcers)

Symptoms:

Kicking, biting or looking at the abdomen.

Laying down, rolling, repeated stretching, pawing the ground or yawning. Not eating

Lack of gut sounds or lack of manure

Rapid respiration and/or heart rate

Sweating

Depression

1) If your horse is showing one or more of the above signs, call your vet and start walking the horse. Allow him to lie down and rest only if he lays quietly, but do not allow him to roll. If he is trying to roll, make him stand and walk.

2) Do not administer any drugs unless directed to do so by your Veterinarian. Drugs may mask symptoms and may prolong an accurate diagnosis and the wrong drug can make it riskier to give appropriate medications later.

3) Your Veterinarian may need to pass a stomach tube and administer oil, fluid or electrolytes, in addition to injections of sedatives or pain medications. In severe cases, transport to a referral hospital for further treatment and/ or surgery may be necessary.

Sudden Severe Lameness

1) Immobilize and confine your horse.

2) Check feet for rocks or nails. If a nail is found, call your Veterinarian immediately. The position and depth of the nail penetration are very important in determining if crucial structures have been damaged. Either let your vet remove the nail or remove it yourself noting the exact location and direction it penetrated the foot. Save the nail to show to your vet. If there is a danger of the nail being pushed further into the foot, do not wait, remove it immediately. Current tetanus vaccination is crucial.

3) If a soft tissue injury is suspected (tendon, muscle or ligament) apply cold water immediately for 15 - 20 minutes and repeat at 1 - 2 hour intervals. Call and consult with your Veterinarian.

Lacerations/Bleeding

1) Control bleeding with direct pressure or a tight bandage. Call your vet immediately if bleeding is excessive or cannot be controlled.

2) Clean wound with water and mild soap or a running hose will suffice. Do not excessively rub or scrub injured tissue to clean.

3) Hair can be clipped around wound edges if possible

4) Immobilize wound by tying or holding horse or confining to a small area.

- 5) If wound appears to need suturing, do not apply any ointment or salve unless directed to do so by your Veterinarian. Call the Veterinarian, in most cases the sooner the wound is sutured the best chance it has to heal.
- 6) Bandage to protect the wound if possible. Remember, improper bandaging will slow wound healing and cause even more damage than the wound itself..
- 7) Current tetanus vaccination is necessary for any wound. If your horse hasn't been boosted in the last 4-6 months with a tetanus or 4 way, re-vaccinate now.

Eye Injuries

- 1) Call your Veterinarian immediately. Eye injuries can progress rapidly to rupture and loss of the eye. There are no minor eye injuries. If your horse is squinting, has discharge, or change in eye color, call. If a foreign body such as a foxtail is visible and can be easily removed, remove it; but the eye should still be seen as ulcers almost always occur.
- 2) The eye may be flushed with sterile saline while waiting for the Veterinarian to arrive.

Snake Bites

- 1) Due to the curious nature of the horse, these injuries often occur on the muzzle. The primary concern is swelling and occlusion of the airways, so always call your Veterinarian immediately. Since horses cannot breathe through their mouths, monitor the airflow through the nasal passage. If the horse is starting to have trouble breathing before the vet arrives, gently insert a 6 inch length of garden hose into one or both nostrils, following the V on the bottom of the nasal passage.
- 2) Snake bites are rarely fatal to horses when bitten in places other than the muzzle. The snake's venom is very toxic to the tissues and can cause skin loss and infection so antibiotics are necessary.

Grain Overload

- 1) Call immediately! Even if there is no immediate illness or discomfort, problems often arise hours or even days after excess feed ingestion. Founder (laminitis) and colic are the primary concerns and in severe cases death may result..
- 2) Determine the type of feed and the amount ingested by the horse before you call as that information will be critical for your Veterinarian to assess your horse's risk.
- 3) Walk the horse while waiting for the vet to arrive if the horse is showing signs of colic. Do not allow him to drink large amounts of water at a time. Do not feed the horse unless directed to do so by your Veterinarian. Watch for signs of diarrhea, colic or sore feet..