

Colic

Colic is a term that means 'abdominal pain'. There are various possible causes of pain, and it is your vet's job to work out what it is, and treat accordingly. Colic is the most common cause of death in horses, however, with swift investigation and treatment, the prognosis is much better than it used to be.

Symptoms

There are numerous possible symptoms your horse may show if experiencing colic, and they differ according to how severe the pain is, and thus how serious the colic is.

- Rolling +/- self trauma
- Pawing at the ground
- Flank watching
- Sweating
- Lip curling
- Lying on their side for prolonged periods
- Rapid breathing

If your horse displays any signs of colic, swift advice from your vet is strongly recommended. They may be able to advise on things you can do yourself if the symptoms are minor, or they may recommend a visit immediately.

While you are waiting...

While you are waiting for the vet to arrive, you can walk your horse, not letting them go down and thus hurting themselves. Sometimes walking can help the guts settle. The horse should never be made to move at a pace faster than walk. Do not let your horse eat anything, as this could potentially make the colic worse.

If your horse is currently receiving any medication or has suffered colic previously, please have these details available for when the vet arrives.

Prognosis

The prognosis from colic can be good to guarded, depending on the underlying cause. Sometimes all that is required is a pain relief and anti-spasmodic injection from the vet and the episode will resolve. In severe cases, the horse will require referring to a specialist hospital and need further investigation and treatment here, sometimes requiring surgery. If referral is not an option and your horse does not respond to treatment provided by your vet, unfortunately euthanasia can be required.