

# EMERGENCY HORSE CARE

## NORMAL EQUINE VITAL SIGNS

	Temperature	Heart Rate	Respiratory Rate
Adult Horse	99° - 100.8° F	30 - 44 beats/min.	8 - 16 breaths/min.
Newborn Foal	99° - 102° F	60 - 100 beats/min.	20 - 40 breaths/min.

**BEFORE YOU CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN:** Assess your horse's condition to the best of your abilities. This information will help the veterinarian determine the severity of the condition and be better prepared to provide prompt and efficient treatment upon arrival. When given accurate, detailed information, the veterinarian can often suggest a course of action for you while you await his/her arrival. **Remember to provide detailed directions and a phone number where you can be reached.**

## COLIC SIGNS

### Clinical Signs:

- Horse may be agitated, paw at ground, look at belly, stretch out as if to urinate, and/or curl upper lip
- Sweating and/or hard, fast breathing
- Horse may lie down, start rolling, or lie down and get up repeatedly
- Horse is often very anxious
- May be depressed, not eating
- May become violent

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Temperature, pulse, respiration rate
- Horse's attitude
- If manure is present, and consistency
- Whether any sedation and/or pain medication has been given; if so, when, what type, how much and how it was administered

### What to Do:

- Call veterinarian after safely obtaining above information
- If in pain, keep horse walking in an open area, preferably with soft footing in case horse wants to lie down
- **Do NOT sedate or give pain medication** unless instructed to do so by veterinarian
- Remove feed
- Watch for passing gas or manure

## SWOLLEN EYE

### Clinical Signs:

- Upper and/or lower eyelid(s) swollen
- Horse may squint in sunlight
- Eye may appear cloudy
- Tears or discharge coming from eye
- Horse may appear to have decreased vision or be blind

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Which eye is affected
- Any obvious laceration or abrasion
- Whether eye is cloudy or teary

### What to Do:

- Call veterinarian with above information
- Remove horse from direct sunlight if possible
- Apply cold compress over closed eyelid if horse will tolerate

**IN AN EMERGENCY,  
FIRST AND FOREMOST,  
REMAIN CALM**

## SUDDEN LAMENESS

### Clinical Signs:

- Horse cannot bear weight or is noticeably lame on one or more legs
- Horse unwilling to move
- Horse appears very tender-footed

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Any obvious heat or swelling in affected leg; if so, where
- Whether horse has recently received any vaccines or injections
- Whether horse has recently been shod or had hooves trimmed
- If there is a foreign object in foot; **if so, do NOT pull it out**

### What to Do:

- Call veterinarian with above information
- Do not move horse; try to keep horse calm

## NOT EATING

### Clinical Signs:

- Horse may pick at feed
- May eat hay but not grain or vice versa
- May take a mouthful of feed but not chew
- Horse may be drooling or have a foul odor coming from mouth

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Temperature, pulse, respiration rate
- If manure is present, and consistency
- Whether there are any other clinical signs or colic signs
- Whether horse is drinking adequate amount of water
- Any current medications or recent management changes

### What to Do:

- Call veterinarian right away with above information
- Remove feed
- Monitor horse for worsening symptoms

## SUDDEN LEG SWELLING

### Clinical Signs:

- One or more legs appear swollen in comparison to "normal" leg
- Horse may or may not be lame
- Swelling may be firm, or may "pit" under pressure

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Temperature, pulse, respiration rate
- If there are any cuts on affected leg(s)
- Whether horse has recently received any vaccines or injections

### What to Do:

- Call veterinarian with above information
- Do not move horse if severely lame
- Cold-hose leg(s) and wrap with standing wrap
- Avoid applying any medications or ointments until leg(s) can be examined

## NASAL DISCHARGE

### Clinical Signs:

- Blood, pus (thick, yellow discharge), feed material or saliva coming from one or both nostrils
- Coughing
- Horse may be anxious or throwing head

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Temperature, pulse, respiration rate
- Color, odor and consistency of discharge; whether there is any feed material in discharge
- If horse anxious, coughing, tossing head

### What to Do:

- Call veterinarian after safely obtaining above information
- Remove feed if horse showing signs of distress
- Keep horse as calm as possible
- If discharge is yellow, quarantine horse and do not touch other horses until affected horse is evaluated

## ALLERGIC REACTION

### Clinical Signs:

- Hives and/or swelling
- Muzzle, eyelid, sheath or throat swelling
- Snoring sound when breathing
- Horse may become very stiff and/or unwilling to move
- May occur after recent vaccination, de-worming or drug administration
- May occur following insect/snake bite

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Temperature, pulse, respiration rate
- Any recent vaccinations or new drugs administered within last few days
- Any recent change in feed
- If horse is in area where venomous snakes are prevalent (during warmer months)
- Whether there is a localized area of swelling and/or presence of hives; if so, where
- If horse is having difficulty breathing

### What to Do:

- **Call veterinarian as soon as possible with above information, especially if horse is having difficulty breathing**
- If hives or localized swelling are present, a cold bath may help
- Remove feed
- Move to a cool location if possible

## LACERATIONS

### Useful Information for Veterinarian:

- Where the wound is located and if it is over a joint or tendon, or if it involves an eyelid
- How large the wound is
- Whether the wound is clean
- If you can see inside the wound
- If the area around the wound is swollen

### What to Do:

- Call veterinarian after safely obtaining the above information
- If actively bleeding, apply pressure with a clean towel/cloth and hold in place with a polo wrap/vetwrap
- **Do NOT remove bandage until veterinarian arrives**
- Check tetanus vaccination history

*Talk with your  
veterinarian about the  
appropriate emergency  
supplies to keep  
on hand.*



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► PRIMARY CARE VETERINARIAN:

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