

Fall 2000 Comstock Health Chronicle

Colic Alert

Late summer and early fall have traditionally been our busiest season for colic surgery. Colic surgery is expensive (at least \$5000), physically challenging for the horse, and emotionally exhausting for the owner. Therefore, we thought it would be worthwhile to review some steps that can be taken to help minimize the chance of your horse needing colic surgery. Unfortunately, these steps are no guarantee that your horse is protected. Even horses under the most ideal management can experience an abdominal crisis. However, elimination of as many risk factors as possible will provide added protection.

Provide clean, fresh, unfrozen water for your horse at all times. Clean the water tub frequently and use a heater when the freezing temperatures arrive.

Feed only the best quality hay. Use grain as a supplement to the diet only. The bulk of your horse's calories should come from hay.

Divide the daily diet into multiple meals (2 or more feedings a day). Try to feed at approximately the same time each day.

Make any changes in diet or exercise very gradually.

Do not allow your horse to get too fat or too thin.

Provide for a regular exercise routine. If you are not able to exercise your horse regularly, provide turnout so that they can move about during the day.

Have your horse's teeth checked by your veterinarian at least once a year and floated as necessary.

Feed your horse away from sand to prevent ingestion and accumulation of sand in the intestines. Do not think you are protected because you feed from feeders.

Horses routinely pull the hay out of the feeders and eat it off of the ground. Learn how to check your horse for sand accumulation (feel free to call us and ask, or ask during your fall clinic appointment).

Maintain a good deworming program (see the spring *Comstock Health Chronicle*). The change in temperature that occurs during the change of season stimulates the release of small strongyle larvae from the wall of the bowel. This can cause changes in gut motility that can lead to severe colic. A larvicidal deworming using Panacur, may help prevent this by killing the larvae before they erupt from the bowel wall.

Consider joining the Preventicare program. This program is provided by Pfizer for horse owners who keep their horses on the daily dewormer Strongid C and who follow the required health maintenance schedule. Pfizer will provide up to \$5000 for colic surgery for any horse on the Preventicare program. Feel free to ask us about the program or attend the up coming seminar on Preventicare (Sept 26).

Web Site Information

Check out the following web site: www.thegrazer.com/. Research has shown this feeder to provide the best protection from sand ingestion of available feeders on the market.