

## **Equine Colic Surgery - Exploratory Celiotomy**

Abdominal surgery in the horse requires general anesthetic which can become complicated in horses, especially those experiencing distress from colic symptoms. A specialized anesthesiologist with knowledge of advanced anesthetic techniques is recommended if available.

The horse is administered intravenous fluids and medications such as antibiotics and anti-inflammatories / analgesics prior to surgery. The area for abdominal surgery is clipped and cleaned for surgery. Intravenous anesthetic is administered to render the horse unconscious after which it will slowly be lowered to the floor. An endotracheal tube is inserted and anesthesia maintained by gas for the duration of the procedure. The horse is then hoisted, usually with hobbles attached to his lower legs, and lifted onto a hydraulic surgical table for where your horse will be secured in dorsal recumbency and a ventilator and equipment to monitor vital signs during the procedure employed. The surgical site will be cleaned antiseptically and surgical drapes used to ensure a sterile incision site. A large incision, often 12-15 inches, longitudinal made on midline starting near the umbilical scar, is made on the horse's abdomen and the abdominal organs manipulated in order to isolate the problem, if determined prior to surgery, or begin exploring the digestive system for cause of colic. If an unreparable condition or one with poor prognosis is discovered, the horse may need to be euthanized during surgery. Most causes of colic discovered during surgical intervention are repairable, and depending on the cause, your veterinary surgeon will perform surgery to remove tumors or dead tissues, manipulate misplaced organs back into place or remove blockages. Incisions will be repaired and observed for signs of leakage, vascularization will be ligated as required during surgery. Once the condition has been repaired and concerns addressed, the abdominal incision is sutured shut and the horse will be moved to a padded stall for recovery. A full body bandage may be employed to provide support to the abdominal incision and prevent tissues putting pressure on the

wound. Intravenous fluids are often continued along with antibiotics and pain medication following surgery. Hospitalization can be required for up to a week or more.