

## PREVENTION/ ADVICE TO THE OWNER

- Always have fresh, clean water available

Horses without water for as little as 1-2 hours, were at increased risk of colic in one study. The risk was especially high for horses over 6 years of age. Additionally, horses have been shown to prefer to drink out of buckets compared to automatic waterers, likely due to the ability to ingest large quantities quickly. In the winter, it is important to ensure automatic waterers and other water sources have free flowing water. In colder weather, horses drink more water if it is warmed. Twice daily addition of hot water to buckets works as well as continuous warm water. When traveling on longer trips, stop to let horses drink and/or have a veterinarian pre-treat them with mineral oil before starting.

- Allow pasture turnout

Horses that have access to pastures have been shown to have a lower colic risk than those without pasture access. Feeding from round bales increased the risk of colic in one study. This increased risk may have been related to decrease in quality in the round bales due to exposure and storage (stored outside), types of hay baled, and/or uncontrolled ingestion of certain types of hay.

- Avoid feeding on the ground in sandy areas.

Horses may ingest enough sand to irritate their intestines. Feed in tubs or hay racks. Place rubber mats or catch pans underneath racks to enable horses to get the scraps without getting sand.

- Feed grain and pelleted feeds only as needed.

Colic risk increased 70% for each pound increase in whole grain or corn fed in some studies. Horses eating pelleted feeds and sweet feeds are also at increased risk for colic compared to horses on a 100% hay diet.

- Watch horses carefully for colic following changes in exercise, stabling, or diet.

Colic risk increases during the two weeks that follow changes. Farms that make more than four changes in feed in one year have three times the incidence of colic than farms with less than four feed changes. Even changing the batch of hay can increase the risk of colic. Make only gradual changes in diet, housing, and exercise whenever possible. To make changes in feed, mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  new with  $\frac{3}{4}$  old for about seven days, then increase the percent of new feed gradually.

- Horse's teeth should be floated every six months.

This ensures good ability to properly and thoroughly chew hay and other feed stuffs.

- Control parasites.

Horses on a daily wormer or horses regularly dewormed are less likely to colic.

- Closely monitor your horse and care for it as much as possible yourself.

Owners who take great interest in their horse's care on a day-to-day basis have fewer incidences of colic. Early signs of impaction colic include dry faecal balls or faecal balls that are smaller than usual. Some horses with impactions, may go slightly off feed (particularly off grain) or change drinking habits during the early stages of colic. Subtle signs will be picked up more quickly if you are familiar with what is normal for your horse.

- Watch broodmares and horses who have colicked previously.

Watch broodmares closely in the two months following foaling. Monitor any horses that have been ill or have colicked before as all are at an increased risk of colic, and early treatment is essential. Treatment with phenylbutazone (bute) can also make horses prone to types of colic and can hide early signs of colic. Discuss the appropriate levels of bute with your veterinarian and avoid using large amounts or prolonged treatment whenever possible.

- Above all, be a proactive owner. If your horse is being placed at unnecessary risk for colic, try to adjust the situation. If your horse does

colic, appropriate and timely care makes a great deal of difference in the outcome.