**FLUID THERAPY**



Many horses with abdominal pain (colic) require IV fluid therapy to correct dehydration, provide maintenance requirements in those that cannot be allowed to drink (gastric reflux), prevent dehydration in horses with excessive water losses (enterocolitis or gastric reflux), and to increase intestinal luminal water content in horses with impactions.

The volume and type of fluid to be given are determined by the severity and cause of the problem.

Maintenance fluid requirements for the adult horse are approximately 40-60 ml/kg/day or approximately 24 liters per day. Overhydration achieved by administering approximately twice maintenance levels can be useful for softening impactions of the cecum and large colon but may be detrimental in horses with small intestinal ileus because it promotes sequestration of gastric fluid.

The composition of the fluids to be administered should be selected based upon the most likely fluid and electrolyte needs and upon results of a chemistry profile. Frequently, a balanced polyionic fluid, such as lactated or acetated Ringers, is appropriate. horses that are not eating should be routinely supplemented with 10-20 mEq/L of potassium (KCl) per liter of IV fluids.

Calcium is important for mediating vascular and intestinal smooth muscle contractility, which affects intestinal blood flow and motility.

Magnesium is also believed to be important for the maintenance of normal intestinal motility and function.

In some instances, sodium bicarbonate may be required to help correct metabolic acidosis.