



Colic

What all horse owners should know

Colic is a general term for **abdominal pain** in horses. It ranges from mild discomfort to life-threatening emergencies. Early detection and rapid veterinary intervention are the best ways to ensure a positive outcome.



Signs of Colic: What to Watch For

Signs can be subtle or violent. Contact your veterinarian immediately if you notice:

- **Mild Signs:** Loss of interest in feed, pawing at the ground, restlessness (lying down and getting up), or looking back at the flank.
 - **Moderate Signs:** Kicking or biting at the belly, stretching out as if to urinate, or a lack of manure production.
 - **Severe (Emergency) Signs:** Violent rolling/thrashing, uncontrollable sweating, rapid breathing, or a bloated/distended abdomen.
 - **Critical Indicators:** Dark red, purple, or blue gums, and a heart rate consistently over 50 beats per minute.
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? What is Colic? (Common Types)

Colic is a symptom, not a single disease. Common causes include:

- **Spasmodic:** Painful intestinal spasms/cramps (often due to stress or diet changes).
 - **Gas:** Excess gas stretching the intestinal wall.
 - **Impaction:** A physical blockage of dried feed material, often due to dehydration.
 - **Displacement/Torsion:** The "twisted gut." A section of the intestine moves or twists, cutting off blood supply. This usually requires surgery.
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Calling the Vet: Information to Have Ready

Before you call, try to gather these details to help your vet prioritize the emergency:

1. The Vital Signs

- **Heart Rate:** Normal is 28 - 44 beats per minute (BPM).
- **Temperature:** Normal is 99.0 - 101.5
- **Gums:** Should be bubblegum pink and wet. Press them and hold for a few seconds; the color should return within 2 seconds once pressure is removed.

2. Current Symptoms & History

- **Behavior:** How long has the horse been showing pain? How severe is it?
 - **Manure:** When was the last time they passed manure? Was it normal?
 - **Recent Changes:** Any new hay, grain, or changes in exercise/turnout?
 - **Medication:** Have you already given Banamine or any other drugs? (Always check with your vet before administering).
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Immediate Actions

1. **Remove all feed** (hay and grain).
 2. **Monitor closely.** If the horse is lying down quietly, let them rest. If they are trying to roll violently, walk them gently.
 3. **Safety first.** Do not put yourself in danger trying to handle a thrashing horse.
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Immediate Actions (Before the Vet Arrives)

1. **Remove all feed and water.**
2. **Keep the horse calm and safe.** Confine them to a small, safe area (a stall or small paddock).
3. **Prevent rolling.** If the horse is attempting to roll, walk them gently, but do not exhaust them or put yourself in danger. If they are lying down quietly and appear comfortable, let them rest.
4. **DO NOT administer medication (especially Banamine) until you speak with your vet.** Pain medications can mask important symptoms, making diagnosis difficult.