

## First Aid and Health Care for your Horse/Pony

The following provides a brief summary of first aid checks you can make on your horse before calling the vet – normal to very abnormal

**General attitude/demeanour** – Bright

Quiet but responsive

Dull

Depressed

Not responsive

**Gum colour** – salmon pink

Pink

Pale pink

White

Red

Blue or purple

**Heart rate/pulse** – resting rate – normal range will vary depending upon fitness

**20bpm to 40bpm** (in some unfit horses 60bpm, but at this rate some concern is raised – know your horses resting rate)

Abnormal – rapid heart rate >60bpm at rest or not recovering after exercise to <60bpm by 30-45mins, weak pulses, abnormal heart sounds

**Breathing rate** – 12breaths per minute – 18breaths per minute – at rest

The breaths are quiet and shallow

Abnormal – heavy rapid breathing, big deep sighing, abdominal effort to breathing, panting, snoring or snorting noise that is persistent, yawning repeatedly, open mouth breathing

**Temperature** – normal range 36-37.8 Celsius

**What to have in your first aid kit?**

- Stethoscope, thermometer
- Set of bandages
- Padding material or sterile gauze
- Poultice
- ABC gel or Aloe Gold Gel
- Rescue Remedy
- Scissors
- Hoof knife
- Antiseptic wash
- Fly repellent

**Genuine Emergency? – when to call the vet**

- you can always call for advise
- if your horse is down rolling with evidence of gut pain
- lameness with joint swelling or not weight bearing

- high fever
- not eating
- allergic reactions
- bleeding that can not be stopped with gentle pressure
- nose bleeds
- eye injury
- severe trauma

### **What is colic?**

A horse owner calling to say their horse has colic is one of the most common emergency call outs for a vet. Colic actually is a description for many problems, where the horse to you shows signs of pain, usually coming from the abdomen. This can be a gut problem, bladder problem, kidney or liver problem. Some also appear 'colicky' when they are having metabolic problems, tying up, or muscle pain. Most commonly horses get tummy pains and colic signs with that when food is changed quickly, new grass growth or change of paddock, when worming is due and/or after a dose of worming if they have a high worm burden.

When a horse has colic or pain they may have a high heart rate, high temperature, breath more heavily and sweat, and may want to roll or be restless. Other horses exhibit pain by becoming depressed and withdrawn.

If your horse appears in pain, gently walk him, offer a pick of dry grass hay. If signs do not subside within 20-30minutes or become more severe call the vet to assess which type of colic he has or why he is in pain.

### **What do I do if my horse is bleeding?**

Try to put pressure on the site of bleeding and a bandage if possible, then call the vet. If the bleeding is from the nose, confine the horse and if bleeding is not slowed to a trickle in a few minutes or reoccurs quickly after wiping it away, call the vet.

### **What do I do if my horse is lame?**

If you can identify which leg he is lame in, rest him and cold hose this leg. Cold hosing can be done for 10-15minutes frequently through initial 24hrs. If the lameness persists or swelling is associated with a joint or a wound is present – seek immediate veterinary advice.

If you can not identify the site of lameness or there is generalised muscle stiffness and soreness, you should seek veterinary advice, assistance from a farrier and a muscle therapist or chiropractor.