

Seven Tips for Preventing Colic

An equine vet offers advice for avoiding this common condition.

By Laura Riley, DVM

1. **Routine:** Keeping a consistent daily routine is important for horses. Any change in a horse's routine can lead to digestive upset. Feed at the same time each day and turn out for the same number of hours daily.
2. **Institute Feed Changes Gradually:** If you are going to switch from one feed brand to another, for instance from timothy to alfalfa, do it slowly. Mix the two feeds together for a week or so while gradually removing the old feed and increasing the new.
3. **Monitor Your Horse's Environment:** Keep an eye on the field! If the apple tree is loaded, you might think about limiting Trigger's time out in that field. If it is the first bloom of lush green grass in the spring, introduce your horses to it gradually. If a storm brings a lot of tree limbs and other debris into the pasture, clean it up.
4. **Deworm Your Horses On a Regular Schedule:** A gut full of parasites can cause bellyaches. Having to kill off too many parasites at once can also cause a bellyache. It's best to not let it get out of hand in the first place. With the ease of administering today's paste dewormers, there is no reason not to deworm on a regular basis. Speak with your veterinarian about a good deworming schedule for a horse residing in your part of the country.
5. **Float Those Teeth:** Veterinarians and equine dentists are available options to float your horse's teeth. When the teeth are left unattended, they develop sharp points that can cause ulcers in your horse's mouth. Also, you want your horse to have the greatest grinding surface available so that he can get that food in the best digestible condition possible before sending it south to his stomach.
6. **Keep The Feed Room Door Locked:** Have your feed in containers the horses can't break into should the door be left open. Gorging on any sort of feedstuff will give horses colic. A serious grain-overload colic will be followed by a terrible case of laminitis (founder), all of which is avoidable if the feed room door is kept locked.
7. **Water, Water Everywhere:** Horses need clean, fresh potable water available at all times. Don't forget to keep the water tub in the field clean and filled. Also, the stall should have at least one large automatic waterer or large bucket available. Remember, horses are not evolutionarily adapted to drinking solid water. For that matter, our equine friends aren't all that fond of very cold water. In order to avoid a fecal impaction, provide water above 50 degrees at all times.

Further Reading

[Colic Surgery Guide](#)

[Acupressure for Colic](#)

[When to Call the Vet](#)