

First Aid Away From Home

What to Do When Accidents Happen on the Trail

Caroline Conn, DVM
Sweetwater Veterinary Clinic

Acknowledgements

- " Acton/ Agua Dulce Public Library
- " Joan Fry
- " Acton/ Agua Dulce Country Journal



Overview

- “ Basic Principles
- “ First Aid Kits
 - Short trail rides
 - Long trail rides
 - In the horse trailer
- “ Specific Conditions
 - Colic
 - Laceration
 - Rattlesnake bite
 - Heat stress/dehydration
 - Tying up/muscle cramps



Basic Principles

- “ An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure
 - Know the trail conditions, including availability of water
 - Be appropriately fit (horse and human) and trained
 - Keep your equipment in good working order
 - Be cautious in extreme weather
 - Ride with a buddy when possible
- “ Don't panic
- “ First aid is just that. It is not a substitute for veterinary attention.
- “ Wear a helmet
 - You can't help your horse if you are incapacitated
- “ Take a cell phone. Make sure it is charged. Attach it to you, not your horse.
- “ Carry identification
 - On you
 - On your horse

First Aid Kits

- “ Short trail ride (1-2 hours around the neighborhood)
 - Human first aid kit (pill vial survival kit)
 - “ Wrap pill vial with cord and/or duct tape
 - “ 2-3 Band Aids
 - “ Small tube/straw of antibiotic ointment
 - “ Alcohol wipe
 - “ Pain reliever such as Advil or Tylenol
 - “ Antihistamine such as Benadryl
 - Equine first aid kit
 - “ Hoof pick
 - “ Sharp pocket knife or multi-tool
 - “ Wire cutter
 - “ Vet wrap
 - “ Maxi pad or disposable diaper
 - “ Two 6-inch pieces of hose



First Aid Kits

- “ Longer ride (several hours)
 - Human first aid kit
 - Equine first aid kit
 - “ Hoof pick
 - “ Sharp pocket knife or multi-tool
 - “ Wire cutter
 - “ Thermometer
 - “ Vet wrap
 - “ Maxi pad or disposable diaper
 - “ Two 6-inch pieces of hose
 - “ Space blanket (desensitize to this before you leave home)
 - “ Instant cold pack
 - “ Flashlight
 - “ Easy Boot or other hoof boot
 - “ Sponge or miracle towel
 - “ Insect repellent roll-on or wipes

First Aid Kits

- “ In the horse trailer
 - Clean drinking water
 - Electrolytes (paste or powder)
 - “ Should not be used if horse is not drinking
 - “ If offered in water, offer unadulterated water as well
 - Stethoscope
 - Thermometer
 - Scissors
 - Bandage material
 - “ Sheet cotton, brown gauze, vetrap, elastikon
 - “ Standing bandage (no-bow or pillow wrap, standing wrap or flannel)
 - “ Polo wrap
 - Can hold a dressing in place but not good for support
 - Eye wash
 - Sterile non-stick pads
 - Gauze squares or pound cotton
 - Surgical scrub (Nolvasan or Betadine)
 - Cooler/anti-sweat sheet/blanket
 - Duct tape

What About Prescription Drugs?



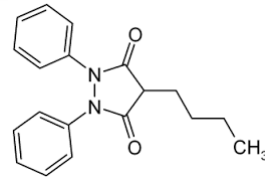
Banamine

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug
- Fever reducer, pain reliever, anti-endotoxin, anti-spasmodic
- Uses
 - “ Colic
 - “ Musculoskeletal pain/inflammation
 - “ Fever
- Potential side effects
 - “ Stomach ulcers
 - “ Kidney damage
 - “ Clostridial abscesses if given intramuscularly
- If used, take vital signs first
- If veterinary attention is available within an hour, do not give Banamine prior to the vet visit

What About Prescription Drugs?

" Phenylbutazone

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug
- Fever reducer, pain reliever
- Uses
 - " Musculoskeletal pain/inflammation
 - " Fever
- Potential side effects
 - " Stomach ulcers
 - " Kidney damage
 - " Severe tissue damage if injected outside a blood vessel.
- If used, take vital signs first
- Do not use multiple NSAIDs together or in combination with corticosteroids



- " Do not share prescription medication with other people.

What About Prescription Drugs?

" Antibiotics

- Antibiotics will be prescribed by your veterinarian if indicated
- It is not necessary to keep antibiotics "on hand" in a first aid kit.

" Why can't I get prescription drugs?

- Legally, drugs must be prescribed for a particular animal for a particular condition
 - " "Just in case" does not qualify
- Drugs cannot be prescribed for an animal without a current active relationship with a veterinarian
 - " Minimum requirement is a physical examination within the last year.

Colic on the Trail

" Signs may be mild/non-specific

- o Decreased energy
- o Looking at sides
- o Pawing, kicking at belly
- o May want to stop, roll

" What to do

- o Dismount
- o Loosen cinch
- o Try to prevent rolling
- o Take vital signs if possible
- o Call veterinarian
- o Get back to civilization as soon as possible.



Colic

" What about Banamine?

- o Oral administration.
 - " Effect in approximately 1 hour, but may be prolonged in colic cases due to altered gut motility
- o IM administration
 - " Action in 20-30 minutes
 - " Risk of severe muscle abscessation
- o IV administration
 - " Action in approx. 15 minutes
 - " Risk of intra-carotid injection
- o Take vital signs FIRST
- o Do not give if your horse is dehydrated
- o If you have a vet on the way, just wait
 - " Vet will assess the horse and give Banamine IV if it is indicated
 - " Rapid onset
 - " No risk of muscle abscesses



Lacerations

- “ Wounds can be tears or punctures
- “ Concerns
 - Blood loss
 - Contamination/infection
 - For penetrating wounds, contact with important anatomical structures such as tendon sheaths, joints, internal organs can be complicating factors.
- “ What should I do?
 - Stop bleeding
 - “ Direct pressure
 - “ Tourniquet for arterial bleeds



Lacerations

- “ What should I do?
 - Prevent contamination
 - “ Flush with clean water +/- antibacterial solution such as Betadine
 - “ Apply antibacterial ointment
 - “ Cover with bandage if possible
 - Prevent further injury
 - “ Penetrating foreign bodies: often best to leave in place unless it will cause further damage
 - Nails in hooves (at home, should be left in place until radiographs can be taken)
 - Near joints or other high motion areas
 - Return to civilization as soon as possible
 - Seek veterinary attention
 - If it is not safe to move the horse, send or call for help to come to your location.

Snake Bite

- “ Southern Pacific Rattlesnake
- “ Bites usually occur on the nose or legs
- “ Prevention
 - Be aware
 - Try to stay on cleared trails
- “ What do I do?
 - Clean bite site with antibacterial scrub
 - If nostrils begin to swell, place short lengths of hose in nostrils to preserve breathing ability
 - Hospitalization for IV fluids, anti-inflammatories, antibiotics, nutritional support, tracheostomy recommended ASAP.
 - “ Haul directly to hospital
 - “ Local vet can evaluate and stabilize



Heat Stress/Dehydration

- “ Signs
 - Lethargy
 - Reluctance to move
 - High heart and respiratory rates that do not return to normal within 10-15 minutes of stopping exercise.
 - “ "Inversion:" respiratory rate higher than heart rate
 - “ Flared nostrils
 - Abnormal heart rhythm possible
 - High body temperature (>103.5)
 - Dark gums, may be tacky
 - Signs of dehydration (skin tenting, sunken eyes, tacky gums)
 - Sweating may be profuse or suddenly stop

Heat Stress/Dehydration

“ Risk factors

- Hot weather, particularly along with high humidity
- Poor conditioning (“weekend warrior”)
- Excessive weight/obesity
- Heavy coat
 - “ Indian summer
 - “ Warm snap mid-winter
 - “ Cushing's disease
- Conformation
 - “ Heavily muscled horses (draft, draft cross, “bulldog” quarter horse)
 - Don't efficiently dissipate heat (surface area to volume ratio)
 - Large muscle masses generate a lot of heat
- Medical conditions
 - “ Respiratory disease
 - “ Cushing's disease
 - “ Anhidrosis (inability to sweat)



Heat Stress/Dehydration

“ What should I do?

- Stop exercise
- Strip tack
- Seek shade and air circulation
- Take vital signs (this will help you monitor your progress)
- If available, apply cool (but not ice) water
 - “ Best: rinse the body, scrape the water, repeat
 - “ If water is limited, apply to groin, inside hind legs, behind elbows, under neck, top of head/behind ears
- Short walks to keep blood circulating
- Offer drinking water
- Monitor vital signs every 5 minutes
 - “ If not improving within 15 minutes or
 - “ If temperature approaches 106, call for veterinary assistance to your location.

Heat Stress/Dehydration



What to do

- Monitor vitals every 5 minutes
 - ” Heart rate <60 beats per minute
 - ” Respiratory rate <60 breaths per minute
 - ” Body temperature <103
- Slowly walk (do not ride) back to civilization
 - ” Check vitals after 5 and 15 minutes for relapse
- Offer drinking water
- Give electrolytes if drinking
 - ” Paste
 - ” Powder in water or feed
 - Offer plain water as well
- Pursue veterinary attention

Muscle Cramps/Tying Up

Signs

- Reluctance to move
- Hard muscles, especially noticeable in haunches
- Cramping muscles
- May see discolored urine
 - ” Pain
 - ” Electrolyte abnormalities
 - ” Heat stress

What do I do?

- Dismount
- Loosen cinch
- Do not force exercise
 - ” This can cause further muscle damage

Muscle Cramps/Tying Up

" What do I do?

- o Keep muscles warm (cold days)
 - " Space blanket
 - " Saddle blanket over large muscle groups
 - " Your jacket
- o Massage large muscle groups
 - " Haunches
 - " Back
 - " Shoulders
 - " Neck
- o Monitor vital signs
- o Monitor for discolored urine
 - " Myoglobin from damaged muscles is excreted through the kidneys and can cause kidney damage

Muscle Cramps/Tying Up

" What do I do?

- o When comfortable, slowly lead back to civilization
- o Seek veterinary attention

" What about drugs?

- o NSAIDs such as Banamine and bute can exacerbate kidney damage
- o Muscle relaxants may make your horse unsafe to navigate the trail
- o Acepromazine may cause a drop in blood pressure
- o Your veterinarian will evaluate your horse and prescribe appropriate drugs.

" Blood work and a search for the underlying cause of the episode is recommended.

- o Check organ function
- o Multiple potential causes for muscle cramping (HYPP, PSSM, RER, etc.)

Questions?

