



American Association  
of Equine Practitioners

Horse Health Education

# EMERGENCY CARE

Guidelines To Follow  
During Equine Emergencies

[www.aaep.org/horseowner](http://www.aaep.org/horseowner)



HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: EMERGENCY CARE

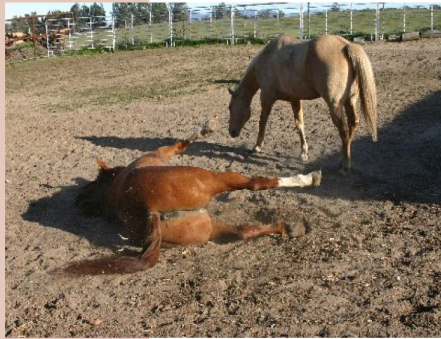
## ROUTINE HEALTH CHECK



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As a horse owner, you must know how to recognize serious problems, respond promptly and take appropriate action while waiting for the veterinarian to arrive.

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Types of emergencies you may encounter include:

- Colic
- Lacerations
- Acute Lameness
- Eye Injuries
- Allergic Reactions
- Choke
- Foaling Emergencies

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### RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Decreased appetite
- Lethargic
- Lying down longer than normal
- Single animal off by itself
- Sudden lameness
- Squinting, tearing or holding the eye closed
- Fever (greater than 102° F)
- Purple or red gum color

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### PLAN AHEAD



Keep important information handy such as your veterinarian's phone number including how to reach him/her after hours.

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### STAY SAFE



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### NATURAL DISASTER PLAN



For more information on preparing  
for natural disasters visit:  
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### TRANSPORT



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## HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: EMERGENCY CARE

### ASSESSMENT



Is it safe to approach the horse?

If so:

- Catch and calm the horse.
- If possible, take the horse to a safe place such as a stall or paddock.
- Get someone to help you.

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### GET ASSISTANCE



It always helps to have assistance in times of an emergency.

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### FIRST-AID KIT



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## HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: EMERGENCY CARE

### FIRST-AID KIT

- Gauze pads
- Roll cotton
- Brown gauze
- Adhesive wrap
- Leg wraps
- Scissors
- White tape
- Duct tape
- Stethoscope
- Thermometer
- Hoof pick
- Surgical soap
- Eye wash
- Antiseptic solution
- Latex gloves
- Flashlight and spare batteries

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### KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL

When you know what is “normal” for your horse, this will make it easier to recognize a problem and describe the horse’s condition to your veterinarian.

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### BASIC EXAM

Take the time to gather information to relay to your veterinarian such as:



- Temperature
- Heart rate
- Respiratory rate
- Gut sounds
- Mucous membrane color
- Capillary refill time
- Attitude and appetite

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### RECTAL TEMPERATURE



Normal temperature for a horse is 99.5 to 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit.  
(37.5 to 38.6 Celsius)

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### HEART RATE

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Normal resting Heart  
Rate = 28 to 44 Beats  
per Minute (BPM)

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### RESPIRATORY RATE

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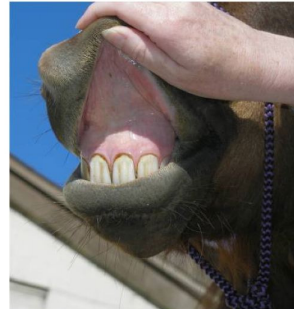
Normal rate = 12 to 16  
Breaths per Minute

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### CAPILLARY REFILL TIME & MEMBRANE COLOR



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### SKIN PLIABILITY

Test your horse for hydration by performing the skin pinch test.

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### GUT SOUNDS



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### ATTITUDE & APPETITE

A change in personality or attitude may indicate pain or disease.

A loss of appetite is a good indication that your horse does not feel well.

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### COLIC



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## HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: EMERGENCY CARE

### COLIC SYMPTOMS



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## HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: EMERGENCY CARE

### THINGS TO TELL THE VET

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- Recent changes in feed or routine;
- Medical information such as pregnancy or recent vaccinations, deworming, etc.;
- Heart rate and gut sounds;
- Quantity and consistency of manure passed in the last 24 hours;
- Do not give your horse any medication or home remedy unless specifically instructed by the veterinarian.

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### WOUNDS & BLEEDING

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Horses frequently get cuts and scrapes. It is important to know which wounds need veterinary attention.

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## HORSE HEALTH EDUCATION: EMERGENCY CARE

### WOUNDS

Wounds that need immediate veterinary attention include:



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### BLEEDING



- Blood squirting or flowing in a steady stream from a wound needs to be controlled.
- To stop bleeding, hold a sterile pad or clean towel to the wound and apply steady, firm pressure.
- Apply a pressure bandage.

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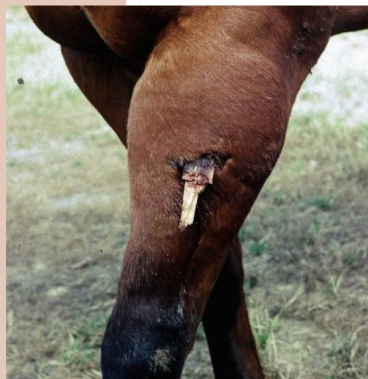


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### FOREIGN BODY PENETRATIONS



- If possible, impaled objects should be left in place.
- Notify your veterinarian before attempting to remove a large foreign object.
- Removing them may cause blood loss or further damage.

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### NAIL IN THE FOOT



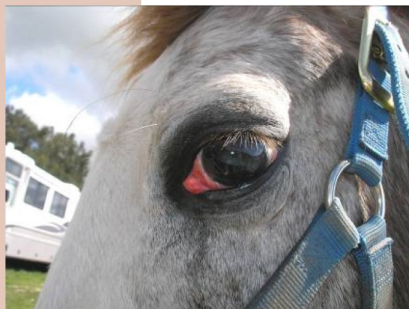
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### EYE INJURIES

An eye injury may be indicated by the following:



- Excess tear production;
- Eye looks cloudy;
- Mucus discharge;
- Holding the eye closed or sensitive to light;
- Swelling around the eye or eyelids;
- Laceration of the eyelid.

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### EYE INJURIES



Do not attempt to treat the injury.

Wait for your veterinarian.

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### SUDDEN LAMENESS



Causes of lameness may include:

- Hoof Abscess (*most common cause*)
- Fractures
- Laminitis
- Tendon injuries

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### FRACTURES



Contact your veterinarian immediately and try to keep the horse calm.

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### LAMINITIS

Laminitis is an extremely painful condition caused by inflammation within the hoof.

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### SIGNS

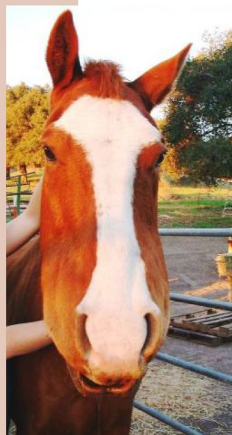


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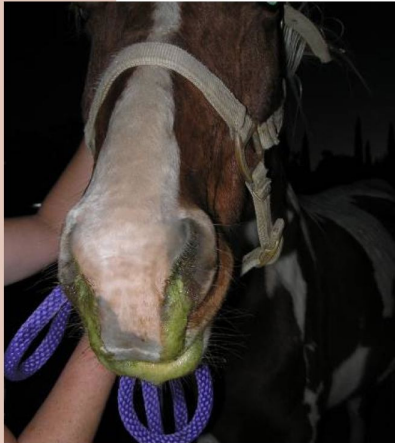
### ALLERGIC REACTIONS



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### SIGNS OF CHOKE

- Coughing & Retching
- Extending the neck
- Large amounts of nasal discharge, containing food and saliva.

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### FOALING

Fortunately, foaling problems are rare, but when there is a problem, it is usually serious.

Ideally, the mare should be attended when she foals so problems can be identified quickly.

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### A NORMAL, HEALTHY FOAL

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Should stand within 1 hour;  
Should nurse within 2 hours;  
Mare will pass the afterbirth within 3 hours.

This is known as the 1, 2, 3 of foaling.

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### VETERINARY EXAM

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*Picture courtesy of Lourie Zipf*

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### DANGER SIGNALS

Notify your veterinarian immediately if:

- The foal seems depressed or lethargic
- Increased temperature > 102° F
- Increased or labored breathing
- Straining to defecate or urinate
- Signs of colic
- Yellow around the eyes or gums
- Swollen or painful joints
- Swollen or painful umbilicus
- Diarrhea

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### PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT



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By acting promptly, you can help minimize the risks of an injury or illness.

Your horse's health and well being depend on it.



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*Photos courtesy of*

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