

FIRST-AID

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DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH A VETERINARIAN WHO KNOWS YOU AND YOUR HORSES.

ITEMS TO KNOW – If you do not know how, work with your veterinarian to teach you:

- How to use a twitch and other restraints
- How to give oral medicine, give an intramuscular injection and an intravenous injection
- How to take a horse's temperature, pulse, respiratory rate, and assess gut sounds
- How to bandage properly
- The parts of your horse including the bones

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Pulse rate: 30-45 beats per minute
- Respiratory rate: 8-20 breaths per minute
- Rectal temperature: 99.5-101.5.
- Capillary refill time: 2 seconds

OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

- Skin pliability is tested by pinching or folding a flap of neck skin and releasing. It should immediately snap back into place.
- Color of the mucous membranes, nostrils, conjunctiva (inner eye tissue), and inner lips of vulva should be pink. Bright red, pale pink to white, or bluish-purple coloring may indicate problems.
- Color, consistency, and volume of feces and urine should be typical of that individual's usual excretions. Straining or failure to excrete should be noted.
- Signs of distress, anxiety or discomfort.
- Lethargy, depression or anorexia.
- Presence or absence of gut sounds.
- Evidence of lameness such as head-bobbing, reluctance to move, odd stance, pain, unwillingness to rise.
- Bleeding, swelling, evidence of pain
- Seizures, paralysis or "tying-up":

HOW TO

- **Take your horse's temperature.**

Use a glass or electronic rectal thermometer. If you use a glass one, tie a string with a clip on the end of the thermometer's end loop. Shake down a glass thermometer's end loop. Shake down a glass thermometer, activate an electronic one. Lubricate the tip with a dab of K-Y or petroleum jelly. Tie your horse, and gently insert the thermometer into his anus to a depth of about 2 inches. Clip a glass thermometer to his tail for security. Hold the thermometer in place. Wait about 2 minutes for a glass one to register, about 30 seconds for an electronic one - listen for the beep. Remove the thermometer, and record your reading.

- **Take your horse's respiration.**

Watch the rib cage move, count the breaths over a 30-second period and multiply by two to get the minute respiratory rate. If you cannot see the ribs move, see if you can see the nostrils dilate with each breath and count those.

- **Take your horse's pulse.**

a) Hold the horse's lead close to the head to keep it still. Place your index finger under the jaw against the inside of the horse's cheek. Move your finger back and forth feeling for the blood vessels. You can feel it roll under your moving finger. Place the tip of your finger over the vessel with firm but gentle pressure. Concentrate on what that finger is feeling. Give yourself time to pick up the pulsations. Once you are feeling the pulse regularly time the number of pulses over a fifteen-second period. Multiply the number by four to give you the minute heart rate of the horse.

b) To use a stethoscope: Place your horse's left front foot forward (if he's standing). Place the head of a stethoscope against his chest wall, just beneath his left elbow, then push the scope as far toward and under the elbow as possible. Listen for the "lubdub" sound of his heartbeat. Count the number of beats in a 15-second period, and multiply that number by four to determine his beats-per-minute (bpm).

- **Take Your Horse's Digital Pulse**

Squat down on the side of your horse's left front leg, and place your index finger around the left side of the fetlock joint at its lower edge. Apply pressure with your finger around the fetlock joint, until you feel a cordlike bundle (consisting of vein, artery, and nerve) underneath your touch. Apply pressure to this bundle for 5 to 10 seconds until you feel a pulse. (Note: If you can't find a pulse, adjust the amount of pressure you're placing on the bundle. If you press too hard, you'll cut off blood flow-therefore the pulse. If you press too softly, you won't create enough resistance to feel the pulse at all).

It helps to know what a healthy pulse feels like-but you can't always find a pulse on a healthy leg/hoof. It might be too faint. If you can easily find his digital pulse he/she may have a problem.

Listen for gut sounds with a stethoscope.

Hold the stethoscope against your horse's lower flank for at least 1 minute. Move the stethoscope higher on his flank, and listen again. Move to his other flank, and repeat this procedure. Normally, you'll hear two to four soft bubbles/gurgles per minute, and one loud grumbling sound every 2 to 3 minutes. If his gut sounds are louder and/or more frequent, he may be experiencing mild colic. If you hear nothing (and your stethoscope is working), he may be experiencing severe colic-silence indicates no gut movement

FIRST-AID KIT

- Glass, electronic or plastic strip thermometer with string and clip attached
- Stethoscope
- Penlight
- Gauze squares and sponges for cleaning and applying pressure to wounds
- Forceps for removing foreign bodies or pinching shut a bleeding artery
- Surgical scrub
- Water or saline solution (contact lens solution)
- Jet-spray bottle for irrigating wounds
- Nonstick wound pads - assorted sizes
- Leg wraps and padding (cotton sheets, quilts, etc.)
- Compression bandage (Vetrap, Coban, Expandover, etc.)
- Adhesive wrap (stretch gauze) & adhesive tape
- Cotton roll
- Easyboot or other treatment boot

- Cold wraps
- Sharp Scissors (Must have rounded ends and should be kept sharp).
- First-aid tape
- Steel cup or container
- Latex gloves
- Permanent marker pen
- Pliers (to pull nails)
- 6" diameter PVC tubing cut in half the long way into lengths of 1.5-2 feet (for emergency splinting).
- Reference materials
- Bucket
- Heat packs
- Ice
- Twitch
- Duct tape
- Syringes
- Tweezers/forceps (to remove splinters, etc.)
- Wound Powder/Ointment
- Antibiotic Aerosol
- Fly Repellent
- Epsom Salts (for soaking abscessed feet)

REFERENCES

American Association of Equine Practitioners <http://www.aaep.org>
 Bayer Equine WellCare Program <http://www.getadv.com/home.html>
 Emergency Chart <http://www.myhorsematters.com/pdfs/EmergencyChart.pdf>
 The Horse <http://www.thehorse.com>
 Equisearch <http://www.equisearch.com>
 Netvet <http://netvet.wustl.edu>