

## *Equine Feeding Disorders*

Many health disorders in horses are related to feeds and feeding. While studying the horse's anatomy, there are anatomical peculiarities that predispose the animal to disorders such as colic and founder. Under good management, the chances these problems can occur are minimized. In all of these instances, a veterinarian should be contacted.

### **Colic**

Colic is a general term for pain in the abdomen of the horse. It most commonly arises from disturbances in the digestive tract due to gas, diarrhea, constipation (impaction), twists and/or torsions of the intestine, and obstructions of blood supply to the intestine.

No other set of symptoms can be caused by so many different things. Another reason colic occurs, is the fact that horsekeeping has changed over time and horses have become more idle animals. An example of this is the trend where horses are being stabled in stalls and paddocks, instead of larger areas that accommodate more mobility. Abnormal feeds on an abnormal schedule can cause colic also. Because of the horse's small stomach, the horse is accustomed to eating small amounts of roughage, day and night, on its own schedule.

Stress, overfeeding, irregular feeding schedules, poor quality feed and forage, decreased water intake, highly fermentable feeds, weather changes, sand, and toxic plants are all potential causes of colic.



### **Laminitis (Founder)**

Laminitis and founder are caused by inflammation of the laminae in the hoof, producing lameness. The laminae is the tissue that surrounds the pedal bone in the hoof. Inflammation of this tissue causes soreness and can eventually cause rotation of this bone, directing it toward the sole of the hoof. Eating large quantities of grain, grazing lush pastures and/or hay, standing or running on hard surfaces, and allowing an overheated horse to drink cold water are common causes of laminitis.

### **Choke**

Choke is a condition where food obstructs the esophagus. This is caused by the horse not chewing its food thoroughly due to dental problems, eating too quickly, not producing enough saliva, or tumors. To prevent choke, it is recommended to wet the horse's feed, schedule the horse for routine dental exams, and turn the horse out on pasture as much as possible to slow down the eating process.

### **Tying-Up**

Also referred to as Azorturia and Monday Morning Sickness. Tying-up is an inflammation and destruction of skeletal muscles that causes muscle soreness and coffee-colored urine. It is referred to as Monday Morning Sickness because it occurs in working or performance horses who are fed the same amount of feed on non-working days (Saturday and/or Sunday), as on working days. Tying-Up occurs when these animals are put back to work, usually on Monday. It can also occur in horses that are unfit or overweight and put to hard work. Nervous horses are susceptible as well as horses exercised in cold, damp weather.



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