



What is Impaction Colic?

The term impaction refers to a blockage within the horse's gastrointestinal tract. The **pelvic flexure** is one of the most common locations for an impaction to occur, because at this point the large colon takes a 180 degree turn and the caliber of the passage reduces; coarse, dry food material can struggle to pass through this point. Any impactions cause discomfort or pain, leading to classic signs of colic in horses.

Any colic should be considered a serious matter and veterinary advice sought immediately.

Causes:

- Change in management such as stabling a horse that was previously out at grass.
- Reduction in exercise i.e. box rest after injury.
- Dehydration due to insufficient fresh water.
- Greedy horses gorging on hay/haylage.
- Horses that eat straw bedding.
- Horses grazing on sandy soil.
- Dental issues.

Signs/symptoms can vary in severity.

In early stages the horse may have reduced faecal output and the faecal balls are small, firm and dry.

The horse will often be dull, lies/sits down with a decreased appetite.

As the impaction worsens the symptoms may include

- Pawing at ground
- Kicking at belly
- Flank watching
- Repeated lying down
- Rolling
- Curling of upper lip
- Sweating

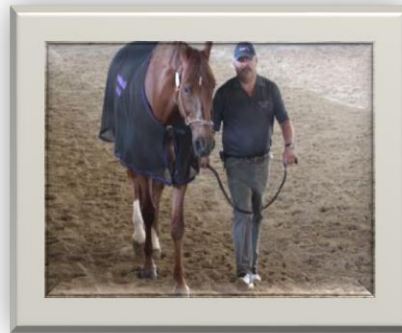




IF YOU SUSPECT IMPACTION COLIC IN YOUR HORSE CALL THE VET AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Treatment may include:

- Rectal examination to diagnose the impaction.
- Naso gastric tubing a combination of electrolytes/laxatives to soften faeces and encourage normal passing.
- Pain relief to control the discomfort.
- Withhold food to stop further build up.
- Walking in hand to stimulate gut motility.
- Some cases of impaction colic clear very quickly at home yet some can take several days which may mean that hospitalisation is required.



Prevention:

- Feed little and often.
- Soak hay for stabled horses.
- Dampen any hard feeds.
- Fresh water should be offered at all times. Encourage the horse to drink by adding a separate bucket of water with additives of apple juice/molasses/mint.
- Add a salt lick in the stable or field to encourage drinking.
- No sudden changes in routine.
- Stable on inedible bedding.
- Turn out as much as possible.

Colic can be very serious and any concerns should be discussed immediately. For any further advice/questions please do not hesitate to call the hospital and speak to one of our qualified equine veterinary nurses.