

# CANBERRA Equine HOSPITAL

## Colic Management Recommendations

- Keep the horse in an area where you can monitor its manure output. Horses should produce **6-10 piles of manure every 24 hours**. Also check the consistency of the manure. It should not be too dry or sloppy and the balls should be a regular size.
- **Do not feed the horse** until your veterinarian has advised it is okay to do so. Often this will be after no further signs of colic and at least 3 or 4 piles of normal manure. We often say not to feed the horse until it is whinnying over the stable door at you!
- Monitor the horse's water intake. A 500kg horse (e.g. thoroughbred) should **drink ~25L every 24 hours**. You can offer electrolyte water as well as fresh, plain water to encourage drinking. Always ensure the horse has access to fresh, plain water, because if they don't like electrolyte water, they may not drink at all. You can also give the horse electrolyte paste by mouth to encourage drinking.
- Monitor the horse for further signs of colic. These may include poor appetite, flehmen response (upturned upper lip), frequent stretching as if to urinate, looking at the belly, kicking at the belly with the hindlegs, lying down more than normal, rolling on the ground and a dull attitude. **If your horse is displaying any of these signs after veterinary attention, please call the vet immediately.** Ongoing colic can mean a serious problem if they have received pain relief and have 'broken through' with further signs of pain.
- Walking the horse may improve gut motility, however we don't want to dehydrate and tire the horse further. Therefore, **walking for 20 minutes every 1-2 hours** is recommended.
- Monitoring the body temperature (normal <38.3°C), heart rate (normal 28-44 beats per minute), respiratory rate (normal 6-20 breaths per minute) and gastrointestinal sounds is a great way to know if the horse is improving.
- If the horse is rolling and thrashing violently, or unsteady on its feet, it is best to leave it alone in a safe environment. **Human safety is the primary priority and a painful horse can be unpredictable.**

Horses can colic for many reasons, so recommendations for management may vary. If you have any questions or concerns with your colicky horse, **please contact us on (02) 6241 8888**. The after-hours line will direct you to the number of the veterinarian on call.