



# Ark Vet Centre

## Equine Newsletter



☀ June 2024 ☀

Welcome to the June newsletter, the last month has certainly been pretty cold at times and it feels like we have been back to winter some days but hopefully summer will arrive properly soon! We hope you have all been enjoying the ride-outs and are looking forward to a busy summer of shows now that show season is officially underway. We have had a few foals born in the last few weeks but have also been busy with colic having seen a few spasmodic colics likely related to the weather causing changes in the grass.

### Spasmodic colic

Spasmodic colic in horses is the most common type of colic seen and is caused when the normal internal movement within the gut (peristalsis) is interrupted. It is often seen in the spring or summer or after owners have moved horses to new lush grazing.

#### Clinical signs

- Lying down
- Pawing the ground
- Curling the top lip
- Straining when trying to urinate
- Looking back at the flank
- Sweating
- Increase in gut sounds
- Increase in heart and respiration rate
- Droppings usually continue to be passed and can sometimes be quite loose.



If your horse shows some of these signs, call your vet promptly, who will be able to diagnose the most likely type of colic your horse has based on a clinical examination. In most cases if it is a straight forward spasmodic colic medical management will resolve the colic. This usually involves giving antispasmodic drugs (buscopan) to return the guts to normal motility and a pain killer to make your horse more comfortable, which are given in injections into the vein.



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The horse should then be monitored to see how it responds to treatment, in some cases gentle walking often helps to settle the horse. Food should also be withheld until the horse has recovered and then reintroduced gradually based on your vet's advice.

If a colic continues and does not respond to routine medical treatment, there is more likely to be something else underlying and further investigations are required. If a colic recurs or does not settle, talk to your vet again.

#### Causes

While the cause of many spasmodic colics remains unidentified, changes to the horse's eating habits, in particular the introduction of lush, fresh grass in to the diet, is a common reason. Other dietary changes, such as access to new forage or introduction of a more sugary feed to the diet, can cause the gut to become overactive, leading to pain.

Changes to a horse's normal routine such as heavy exercise in a horse that is unfit, transporting a horse that finds the experience stressful, or other sudden management changes can also cause interruption to the normal gut movement and risk triggering a spasmodic colic episode. In many cases however, we do not ever know exactly what the cause of a colic is.

#### Avoiding a colic

Ensure new or lush pasture is introduced gradually, by restricting the time your horse is in the field, while supplementing diet with hay.

Make any changes to the horse's diet gradually over a period of at least three to four days.

Avoid exposing the horse to stressful experiences or try to minimise stress as far as possible.

Pro-biotics can be useful, especially in horses prone to colic, to try to maintain a healthy digestive system.



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