

Horses Land Water

Improving the health of horses and the environment

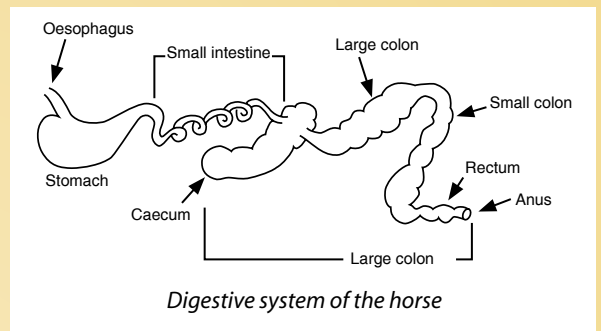
SAND COLIC • SAND-INDUCED DIARRHOEA

Bare soil • Unimproved pastures

SAND COLIC

Two very common disease states that result from ingestion of sand are colic and diarrhoea.

Colic is a broad term for painful digestive tract disorders. Horse owners should have a basic understanding of the function of the horse's Gastro-Intestinal Tract (GIS).



Common causes

- Ingested sand is a problem because it mechanically irritates the lining of the small intestine or large intestine causing inflammation. In some cases sand prevents the large intestine from reabsorbing water resulting in **diarrhoea**.
- In severe cases, sand accumulates in the large intestine causing a complete blockage which can lead to an extension of the bowel wall, compromising of blood supply and death of a section of bowel wall. If the blood supply of the horse's intestine is severely compromised, or the bowel ruptures, the horse can die.

Treatment of colic can be drawn out and expensive. The veterinarian may have to visit several times and owners may be faced with a decision of surgery (with no guarantees) or destruction.

Symptoms

- Diarrhoea
- Rolling
- Pawing the ground
- Off feed
- Unusal stance or behaviour
- Kicking and looking at stomach
- Prolonged time spent lying down
- Not drinking
- Depression



Avoid overgrazing



Maintain good pastures

Sand colic is largely preventable if land management is sound.

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What to do

Sand colic can progress to a potentially fatal outcome.

- Call the veterinarian as soon as you notice any symptoms and follow their advice.
- Record your observations to assist in planning a treatment program.

Tips for preventing sand colic and diarrhoea

- Develop an ongoing preventative strategy (seek professional advice).
- Feed a balanced diet high in fibre (i.e. roughages such as hay and grass)
- Avoid sudden dietary changes.
- Horses spending long hours in sand yards need regular feeding and exercise programs to prevent boredom.
- Ask your veterinarian about a suitable vitamin and mineral supplement.
- Ask your veterinarian about suitable products which may aid in reducing the occurrence of sand-related colics.
- Monitor sand levels in manure by mixing manure with water in bucket. Let the sand settle and compare the amount with other horses on your property, or in the district.

Land Management

- Consider electric fencing to keep horses off bare sandy paddocks.
- Avoid overgrazing which usually results in bare areas.
- Maintain good pastures by implementing a suitable fertilizer and weed control program.
- Rotationally graze paddocks and do not continuously graze small paddocks.
- Keep horses in yards or stables to rest pastures which are under threat of being overgrazed.
- Bare areas may need to be resown with a pasture mix suitable for your region. Perennial ryegrass, cocksfoot, phalaris, fescue, kikuyu and subterranean clover are ideal in high rainfall regions. (seek professional advice before embarking on a reseeding program).
- Do not feed hay on bare ground. Feed from ground level constructed feedbins, haybags or racks. Paddock feeding areas should be compacted surfaces (e.g. dolomite) or dense grass-based pastures.

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Funding for the HorsesLandWater Peri-Urban Project has been provided through the National Landcare Programme – Natural Resource Innovation Grant



This update of this publication has been sponsored by the Environment Protection Authority, adapted from an original Fact Sheet produced with support from the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board:



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