Although certain illnesses and conditions will have obvious signs and indicators that a veterinarian should be called, others may not. It is critical to know the normal behavior, attitude, and gait of your horses, since changes that could require veterinary attention may be subtle at first. No one knows your horse better than you. Learn how to take your horse’s heart rate (normal 28-48 beats per minute), respiratory rate (10-20 breaths per minute), and temperature (99-101.5°F), and know the normal values for your horse. Be familiar with normal gum color (light pink) and capillary refill time (less than 2 seconds). Understanding normal for your horse will help you identify subtle changes, and improve communication with your veterinarian.

Equally important as knowing when to call your vet, is having a plan for emergencies. Keep important phone numbers readily available, have a plan for transportation if your horse requires referral to a hospital, and keep a first aid kit on the farm and in your trailer. Consider discussing a backup veterinarian with your vet in case they are unavailable. Keeping directions and maps available to local veterinary hospitals may help expedite travel should that be necessary. Most importantly, remember to stay calm and call your vet sooner rather than later if you suspect a problem.

When should I call the vet about my….

**Foal:**
- Remember the 1-2-3 Rule! 1 hour to stand, 2 hours to nurse, and 3 hours for the mare to pass the placenta. If any of these are broken – call your vet!
- Mare has no milk, foal not nursing, IgG low (not enough colostrum)
- All foals should be evaluated by a veterinarian within 12-24 hours of birth to ensure adequate passive transfer
- Diarrhea in first few days of life or any diarrhea that persists
- Fever (Temperature > 102°F)
- Behavior abnormal
- Seizures or other neurological signs
- Unable to stand
- Colic, Bloat
- Milk coming out nose
- Difficulty breathing or increased respiratory rate
- Any abnormalities with the eye – tearing, squinting, swelling, cloudy appearance
- Straining to urinate or defecate
- Lame, swollen joint or joints
- Call if any doubts or questions

**Yearlings and Adults:** see Specific Symptoms and Conditions

**Older Horse:** Also see specific symptoms and conditions
- Losing weight
Not eating well
Dropping feed or difficulty chewing may indicate dental disease
Not shedding out in spring/ long, curly hair coat
Drinking and/or urinating excessively
Lameness

**Reminders for veterinary calls in the…**

**Spring:**
- Routine Vaccination of adults
- Discuss deworming schedule for the year/ fecal exams
- Annual Physical/wellness examination
- Breeding soundness exams on mares and stallions
- Foal wellness exam in first 12-24 hours of life and IgG check

**Summer**
- Begin vaccination series for weanlings at 4-6 months of age
- Deworming foals and weanlings begin at 30-60 days of age

**Fall**
- Vaccination boosters, 2nd dose weanlings
- Annual dental exam (any time of year)
- Wellness Examination

**Winter**
- Vaccination 3rd dose weanlings

**Any time of year:**
- If you are purchasing a new horse, call your veterinarian for a thorough physical and soundness examination.
- Any time you suspect an emergency or note any of the symptoms listed below

**Specific Symptoms and Conditions:**
- Call the vet if your horse has…
  - Fever (Temp > 101.5°F adult, >102°F foal): Temperatures over 103 F indicate a serious problem, and your horse should be placed in a cool area with fans and hosed off until the vet arrives.
  - Abnormal gum color (red, purple, white, or yellow)
  - Squinting, swollen, cloudy or tearing eye
  - Yellow or green nasal discharge
  - Loss of appetite or difficulty eating
  - Chronic cough
  - Sweating profusely
  - Lame (head-bobbing, reluctant to walk or trot, laying down more than usual)
  - Unable to get up
  - Unable to move
Gait uncoordinated (ataxia) or stumbling excessively
Seizures or collapse
Profuse bleeding, deep wounds or lacerations
Difficulty breathing (nostril flare, distressed, increased respiratory rate)
Injury over a joint, tendon, or on the bottom of the foot
Depression or anxiety
Diarrhea (more than loose manure from excitement/trailering)
Blood in the urine
Heat stress
Unusual swelling or suspected bite (snake, spider, etc)
Mare is foaling and there is no progression in 10-15 minutes from water breaking:
   normal deliveries take 30-40 minutes from water break to foal on the ground.

Colic:
   Pawing, rolling, stretching out, flank watching
   Sooner is ALWAYS better than later – Call when you notice a problem!
   Signs are severe or unrelenting
   Persistent pain despite initial treatment with pain reliever/sedatives
   High heart rate/respiratory rate/abnormal gums
   Chronic, mild signs of colic

Remember that this list is not exhaustive. If you have specific concerns about your horse’s condition, it is always better to call and discuss them with your veterinarian. Earlier diagnosis and treatment typically provides you and your horse with the best possible outcome.

**Recommended First Aid Kit Supplies:**
- Thermometer (Digital thermometers work well)
- Stethoscope
- Scissors
- Adhesive tape and duct tape
- Hemostats
- Leg wraps
- Soap
- Flashlight
- Clippers
- Phone numbers
- Latex gloves
- Antiseptics (Chlorhexidine, Betadine solution)
- Wound dressing
- Hoof pick and knife
- Phenylbutazone (Bute)
- Bottles of sterile saline
- PVC pipe for splinting
- Sterile bandage materials: roll cotton, gauze pads, Cling wrap
- Sheet cotton
Elastikon®
Vetwrap®