



# Equine Colic Fact Sheet

Amanda M. House, DVM, DACVIM  
University of Florida CVM

- Colic is not a disease, but it is a SYMPTOM of a disease. Colic is defined as any abdominal pain and can come from any abdominal organ, not just the GI tract.

## Normal Adult Horse Physical Examination:

Temperature: 99-101.5 F  
Heart rate: 24-48 beats/minute  
Respiratory Rate: 10-24 breaths/minute  
Good gastrointestinal sounds on both sides of the abdomen  
Normal manure output – 6-10 piles/24 hours  
Mucous membranes pink and moist, Capillary Refill Time <2 seconds

## Possible Signs of Colic:

Mild: decreased or no appetite, reduced fecal output, depressed, lip curling  
Moderate to severe: flank watching, pawing, rolling, bloated, getting up and down, stretching out, laying down more than usual

## Call your veterinarian:

Sooner is ALWAYS better than later – Call when you notice a problem!  
Signs are severe or unrelenting  
Persistent pain despite Banamine/sedatives  
High heart rate/respiratory rate/abnormal gums  
Chronic, mild signs of colic that do not go away

## Preventing Colic:

Good Management: high quality hay – very important!  
Regular exercise  
Regular deworming and dental care  
Limit grain-based feeds, divide the daily concentrate ration  
Establish a set routine  
Keep good records  
Minimize stress  
Monitor closely when transporting  
Observe pre and post foaling mares  
Monitor horses closely with history of colic  
Remember that intestinal accidents can happen under even the best management!

Please remember to call your veterinarian if you have any concerns. We are available at the University of Florida 24 hours a day at 352-392-2229.