

# Preventing Colic in Horses

*Written by*

**Dr. Christine King**  
BVSc, MACVSc, MVetClinStud

*Consulting Editor*

**Dr. Anthony Blikslager**  
DVM, PhD, Dip. ACVS

**Preventing Colic in Horses**

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## Front matter

### **Please note...**

In writing and producing this book, every effort has been made to provide accurate information and sound advice on preventing colic in horses. But ultimately, it is up to the reader to determine whether and how to use the information contained in this book. We encourage you to discuss management changes that may impact the health and performance of your horse(s) with your regular veterinarian beforehand. As your veterinarian is familiar with your area, the scope and limitations of your facility, and your horse(s), s/he is the best person to consult for advice on horse healthcare. We defer to him/her in all matters discussed in this book.

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**Thanks to...**

**Dr. Anthony Blikslager**, my consulting editor, for ensuring both the scientific accuracy and practical value of the material in this book. Anthony is a gifted equine surgeon, a noted researcher in the field of gastrointestinal physiology, and, above all, a horseman—a potent combination, to the horse's benefit.

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**Dr. Robin Peterson**, for the excellent illustrations. Robin trained and worked for some years as an equine surgeon before becoming a medical illustrator, so her drawings have the added dimension of actually having "been there." [2016 Note: Dr. Peterson's illustrations have been lost to time and have been replaced with more generic illustrations for this web reissue.]

*Thanks for so generously giving me your time  
and the benefit of your experience.*

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Colic is a horse owner's worst nightmare. While it's quick to appear, colicking can be difficult to deal with. Fortunately, you may be able to keep your horse healthy and reduce the need for an expensive vet bill by preventing colic in your horse. Start by making sure your horse is eating a proper diet. Additionally, provide your horse with good care to help maintain its health. Preventing Colic In Equines Difficult with No Clear (and Many) Cause. Although colic remains the number one killer of horses, the science of diagnosing and treating colic has made great advances. More horses than ever are able to be saved by surgical and medical treatment, and have fewer complications after treatment. However, little is still known about the causes of colic and how to prevent it. Colicky horses are best treated by a veterinarian. Findings of interest were that horses that were fed high-quality fiber, such as from hay or pasture grazing, were less likely to develop colic. Also, horses with access to multiple pastures or who were pastured at all times showed a reduced risk. Many horses with colic benefit from fluid therapy to prevent dehydration and maintain blood supply to the kidneys and other vital organs. The fluids may be given either through the nasogastric tube or IV, depending on the particular intestinal problem (see General Concepts Regarding Fluid Needs in Dehydrated Horses). A common cause of colic in horses is simple obstruction of the large colon by dehydrated ingesta, sometimes mixed with sand. These impactions generally develop near the pelvic flexure or in the right dorsal colon but may involve any portion of the large colon, descending colon, or cecum. In most instances, lubricants or fecal-softening agents given through a nasogastric tube soften the impacted ingesta, allowing it to be passed.