

Emergencies and Your Horse: Where and what to know
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Medical emergencies are the most frightening times with your horse or horses. Just thinking about emergencies can be scary. Your own personal knowledge and planning can be helpful for prevention, positive outcome for your horse, and less cost and less anxiety on your part. What are emergencies? Colic, bad bleeding cuts, a horse stuck or stolen, trailer accident, chemical spills, fire, etc.

- Know your horse's temperature, pulse, respiration (TPR). Read Equus and The Horse magazines. Go to educational courses put together by your county extension, REINS people, or regional Veterinary College. Personal knowledge is important; so read, discuss with your veterinarian and your horse owning neighbors.
- Develop a neighborhood watch program. Neighbors can be looking out for your horses when you are at work or on vacation as they drive by. They can register an odd vehicle and notify you. Each neighbor can store one emergency supply for the week long blackout. They can help haul a horse.
- Know your veterinarian. Have a discussion as to how to handle emergencies with their practice. Know the veterinarians who are their back up veterinarians for emergencies. Work with your neighbors and local Reins volunteers to put together an emergency planning session (social) with the veterinarian annually who serves you and your neighbors.
- Know your regional equine referral hospital. Plan a visit before you have an emergency. Learn their policies on emergencies. Know that if by chance you cannot get your veterinarian in a timely manner for your horse in an emergency you can take your horse directly to the regional equine hospital. Attend their open house.
- Just like in a human heart attack – time is of the essence. If hospitalization or surgery is a remote option in a colicky horse, foaling mare problem, fracture, severe medical difficulty; getting them to the hospital within three hours of discovery of the problem and efforts by your veterinarian, is important. It can be less stressful, maybe life saving and maybe a lot less money than if one waits to see what will happen. Getting to the regional referral hospital gets you a second opinion as well as immediate fluid treatment. Decisions on surgery, other tests, etc can be made at the hospital after the examination. If the horse doesn't need surgery, and is well in the morning; it can go home and everyone is happy!!!
- All emergencies do center around you having transportation ready to go for your horse and your horse is broke to load on command.
- Know your county animal rescue team (CART) people. Participate in their emergency planning for horses in disasters (A disaster is a situation greater than can be handled by one veterinarian and one owner like hurricanes, fires, hazardous spills, trailer accidents, etc
- Develop your own emergency plan-both for an individual situation (like colic, broken leg, eye problem) or disaster (trailer accident, fire, ice storm).

Knowledge and planning are power!