

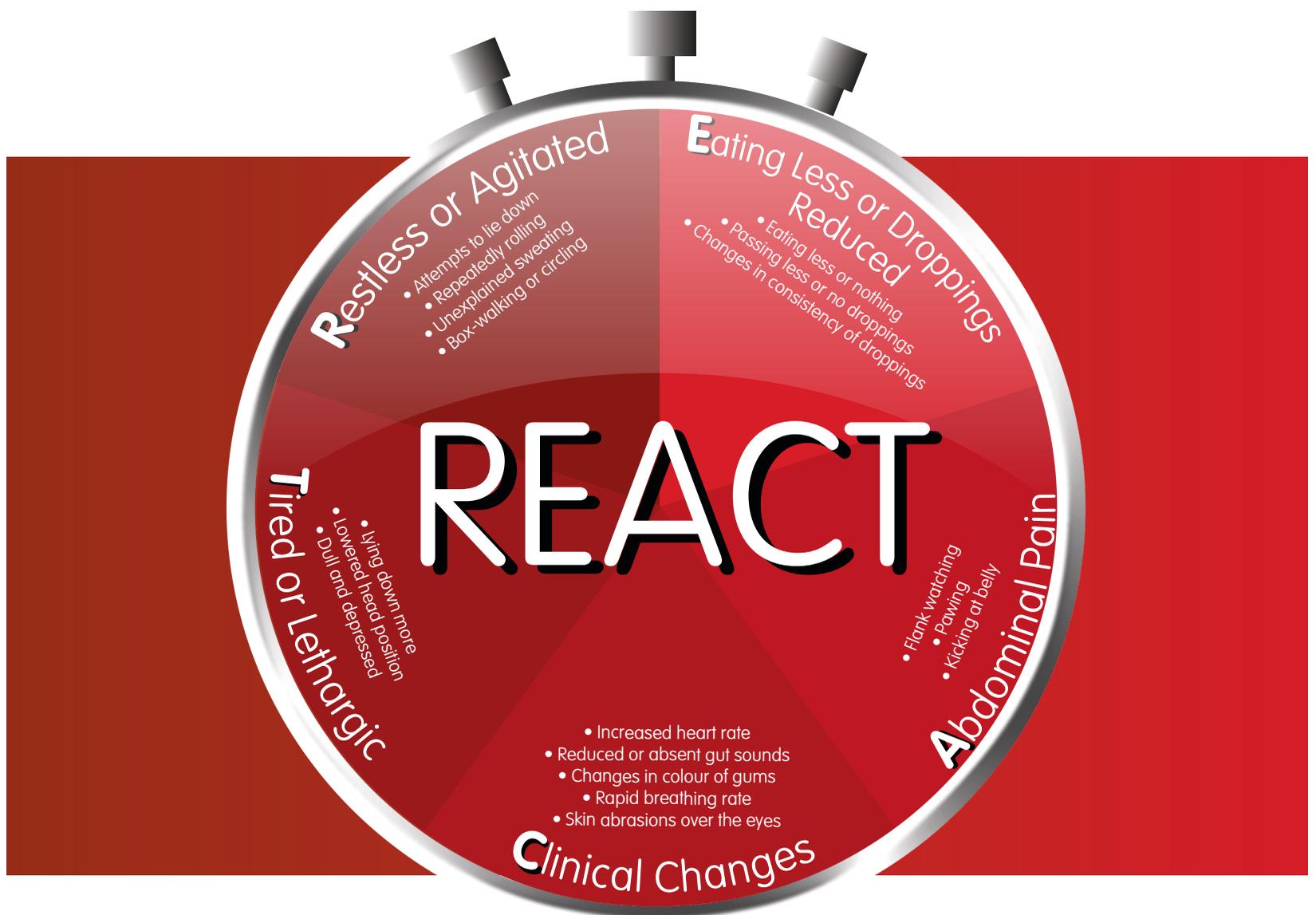
WAITING FOR THE VET TO ARRIVE



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What to do when your horse has colic and you are waiting for the vet or referral to a veterinary hospital

If your horse is in severe pain (i.e. trying to get down and roll) it is advisable to put them in a safe area such as a well bedded stable or in an arena. If the horse is taken into an arena, the handler should not allow the horse to go loose. The horse should ideally be kept on a lunge line to aid the handler's control and to help decrease the risk of injury. For safety, the handler should wear a hat and gloves. If the horse is taken into a stable, leave them quietly until your vet arrives and can administer a sedative/painkiller. Take out buckets or objects the horse may injure themselves on to help decrease the risk of injury. Allowing the horse to lie down and/or roll does not make colic worse or cause a twisted gut. Although it can be distressing to witness the horse in significant pain it is strongly advised that the handler does not re-enter the stable without veterinary support to help prevent a potentially serious accident to the handler. It is important to remember that a horse in significant pain will not be conscious of its surroundings and therefore you should take all measures to ensure your safety.

For more information please visit: bhs.org.uk/colic

Photo: Julie Priestly



Do not force the horse to walk around if they are trying to go down. A horse that is in pain may seriously injure any people around them and may injure themselves further, for example by going down on concrete.

If your horse is in significant pain, gentle walking for 15-20 minutes can help and will not harm them. However horses must not be exercised at a trot or canter and should not be walked around for longer periods of time unless under the supervision of your vet. There are specific conditions /circumstances when your vet may recommend other exercise. This should only be done following diagnosis and under supervision from your veterinary surgeon, as any exercise beyond gentle walking is not recommended for most conditions. If in any doubt, ask your veterinary surgeon.

Exercising a horse that is sick will just exhaust them and if they have a serious form of colic that requires surgery, this will not help their recovery from anaesthesia.

- Remove any feed from the stable. Horses that are not in violent pain and are standing calmly in the stable can have water left with them; although a sick horse is unlikely to drink.
- Provide your vet with good directions and a contact phone number.

If it is likely to be difficult for the vet to find your horse, get someone to stand by the roadside near a defined landmark to help direct them to the yard / field.

- If your horse is insured but you're not certain if they're covered for colic, you may want to check your insurance policy. This will help to prevent delays and help you make informed decisions about treatment in case your vet wishes to send them to a clinic for further assessment and treatment.

Check that you have a plan in place for transport in case your vet decides that your horse needs to be assessed at a clinic. If your horse is in a lot of pain or sick, any delay can be crucial so don't leave this until the last minute.

- Check that the trailer / horsebox does not have any flat tyres and that the horsebox will actually start. From a referral centre point of view, difficulties with transport is a frequent cause of delays, which can be really critical in saving the life of a horse with severe colic.

If your vet advises that your horse should be assessed at a clinic:

- Discuss the potential costs (at this stage only a rough guide can be provided) and whether a deposit is needed. Costs will vary slightly between clinics, but your vet and the clinic will be able to provide you with more specific estimates and some idea of likely complications and chances of survival.
- Check that you have good directions and the telephone number of the clinic and keep them updated if there are any problems or delays during the journey. It is important to get to the clinic as soon and as safely as possible.