**CLIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT**

**Customer Name, Street Address, City, State, Zip code**

**Phone number, Alt. phone number, Fax number, e-mail address, web site**

**Intra-Abdominal Hemorrhage in Horses**

**Basics**

**Overview**

* Hemorrhage and abnormal accumulation of blood in the abdomen of the horse
* Potential life-threatening problem
* Often vague and nonspecific signs. The most common signs are depression, signs of shock, and colic signs

**Signalment**

* Most common in Arabians and Thoroughbreds, older horses (more than 13 years of age) and multiparous broodmares

**Signs**

* Depression
* Dullness
* Weakness
* Anorexia
* Colic
* Shock

**Causes**

* Trauma
* Neoplasia
* Mesenteric injury
* Organ rupture
* Coagulopathies
* Phenylephrine administration
* Postsurgical bleeding

**Risk Factors**

* Age—older horses
* Pregnancy—peripartum hemorrhage before, during, or after foaling
* Blunt external trauma to the spleen or kidney
* Parasitism—*Strongylus vulgaris*

**Treatment**

**Appropriate Health Care**

* Intensive care and monitoring
* Intravenous fluid therapy
* Blood transfusion
* Surgery (exploratory laparotomy)

**Activity**

* Strict rest
* Restrict exercise for 90 days post recovery

**Diet**

N/A

**Surgical Considerations**

* Surgery (exploratory laparotomy) is indicated when there is an absence of response with medical treatment

**Medications**

N/A

**Follow-Up**

**Patient Monitoring**

* Patients will need to be monitored initially every 5 minutes (mentation, heart rate, pulse strength, capillary refill time, jugular vein distensibility)

**Possible Complications**

* Cardiovascular collapse
* Death
* Septic peritonitis
* Colic

**Expected Course and Prognosis**

* 50–70% survival rate
* Horses with a high respiratory rate (more than 30 breaths/min), neoplasia, mesenteric injury, or coagulopathy are less likely to survive
* The prognosis for survival is poor in postparturient broodmares with a vessel that has ruptured into the abdomen
* Horses that survive in the short term have a good prognosis for long-term survival
* Guarded prognosis with postoperative hemoperitoneum after abdominal surgery

**Key Points**

* This is a serious condition and a real emergency with life-threatening consequences for the horse
* If you suspect an intra-abdominal hemorrhage (post foaling, older horse, post trauma, etc.) look for the typical signs—depression, weakness, abdominal discomfort, signs of shock (increased heart rate and respiratory rate, pale mucous membranes, weak pulses)
* The horse should be kept quiet while seeking veterinarian attendance



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*Blackwell's Five-Minute Veterinary Consult: Equine, Third Edition,* Jean-Pierre Lavoie © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.