

Equine Gastric Ulcers

What are ulcers?

Ulcers are erosions of the lining of the stomach, most often the upper or squamous portion which doesn't have mucous secretions to protect it.

Which horses are at risk for ulcers?

Horses under stress (i.e. 90% of race horses and 60% of show horses) have been found to have ulcers in some studies.

- One study showed that just moving from one location to another can increase incidence of ulcers.
- Horses under treatment with NSAIDS, such as Phenylbutazone (commonly referred to as "Bute").
- Horses that are stabled.

Horses are designed to graze all day, giving a steady flow of saliva and roughage to neutralize stomach acid. Twice a day feeding of a grain-based diet does not provide that.

How do I know my horse has ulcers?

Proving the presence of ulcers requires a long endoscope, which many veterinarians do not have. Diagnosis is more difficult because many horses with ulcers show no obvious symptoms. However if your horse has a poor appetite, decreased performance, is prone to periodic bouts of colic or grinds its teeth, he/she may have ulcers.

At Oakwood Veterinary Service, we have utilized a new test for fecal occult blood as an aid in diagnosis. This test can detect blood in the manure and may be able to tell whether it comes from the stomach or the lower gut (colon and cecum).

Trial treatment: An improvement in symptoms following a thirty-day trial is suggestive of ulcers.

Treatment and Prevention – The only proven treatment is Omeprazole, most often sold as *Gastrogard* or *Ulcergard*. These medications directly reduce acid production in the stomach. Prevention is much more important.

- Feed more often. Ideally horses allowed to graze all day are at lower risk.
- Recognize stress periods – changes in training, trips to shows.
- Protect with low-dose Omeprazole during those periods.

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Next month we will cover preparing for a safe and successful foal delivery.



Spring is comin' 'round the corner!

It's that time of year again! Show season, breeding season and trail riding are just around the corner. Spring and fall wellness exams help your horse stay healthy all year round.

Vaccinations such as West Nile, Eastern/Western Sleeping Sickness, Potomac Horse Fever, Tetanus, Rabies, Influenza, Strangles and Rhinopneumonitis are important for your horse. Coggins (EIA) tests are valid for one year in Illinois and Iowa. We recommend deworming every 8 weeks and a yearly fecal exam.

Good dental care is paramount to your horse's overall health. Young horses will lose their deciduous (or baby) teeth between two and a half years old up to five years old. Retained caps (deciduous teeth that are not shed) can cause discomfort, possibly becoming impacted with food. Routine dental exams every 6 months for horses 2-5 years old are preferable.

Adult horses should have their teeth examined at least once yearly or as recommended by your equine veterinarian. Geriatric horses should have routine dental work every 6 months.

Contact us for more information at
(877) 949-2144. Visit our website:

www.oakwoodvets.com



Keep Safety in Mind with Your Horses

Closely inspect your horses' living areas.

- Are there electrical cords they can reach?
- Do you see dangerous nails or broken fence?

You can bet your horse will find trouble without looking too far. Take frequent walks to find any underlying disaster. Be sure you look at every angle, particularly from your horses' perspective.

Equine boredom translates into:
"What can I get into today?"

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