

## Emergency Preparedness

Are you prepared for that unexpected medical emergency involving your horse? What would happen if your horse suffered a severe injury or colic while you are away? What if you, yourself are involved in a tragic accident? No one likes to think about the terrible “what ifs”- you know, the kinds of things that happen to “other people.” The following are some suggestions that might be helpful to you in the event of an emergency.

Establish or maintain a good relationship with your veterinarian. You do not want to be looking through the phonebook for a veterinarian who does not know you at 12am. If your veterinarian is away, ask him/her if you are covered in the event of an emergency.

Your veterinarian can also help you put together a home or ranch emergency kit.

Be prepared to transport your horse to a veterinary hospital. Just as with people, many medical and surgical emergency treatments are best administered in a medical facility.

Have an emergency transportation plan in place to evacuate your horses in the event of a fire.

Notify your veterinarian in writing when you are planning to be away from home and who will be responsible for your horse care. Identify to what extent (financial, medical, surgical) you are prepared to go to treat an emergency condition. Always leave phone numbers if you are going to be away.

Try to maintain the same daily feeding and turnout schedule. The risk factor for colic more than doubles when horses are cared for in the owner’s absence.

Insurance—loss of use, major medical and mortality policies are available. Be aware that if a claim is made, you can expect an exclusion will be written for the condition claimed (and related conditions) at policy renewal time.

Include your horses in your will. Identify new owners/caretakers, designate how tack, feed and financial resources are to be distributed. Also, have a plan for your horses prior to the disclosure of your will.

If you are like me, the better prepared you are the less likely you will need all the preparation. It’s definitely worth doing.

Wayne B. Schmotzer, DVM, Dipl. ACVS of Bend Equine Medical Center can be reached at 388-4006.