

Psyllium power



Psyllium pellets



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# Sand Colic

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Many horses accidentally ingest sand as they are grazing or eating hay off of the ground. Small amounts of ingested sand may pass easily through the gastrointestinal system causing minimal irritation to the intestines. Larger accumulations of sand will often settle onto the bottom of the large colon, causing significant irritation and pain in the intestine.

The problem with sand:

- Accumulations of sand act like sandpaper, creating micro abrasions on the sensitive inner lining of the intestines.



- Abrasions result in **inflammation** within the intestines.
- Inflamed intestines secrete more fluid into the bowel, creating **diarrhea**.
- Inflammation causes **pain**, and pain changes the way intestines function. Normal propulsive contractions in the intestines slow down, and feed can become impacted within the intestines.

### Signs of sand accumulation:

- Generic signs of colic include rolling, pawing, inappetance, lying down for extended periods of time, and failure to pass manure for more than 8 hours –colic associated with sand may be mild or quite severe.
- Diarrhea, which may be intermittent or chronic, and may vary from soft “cowpies” to watery diarrhea.
- A decline in the general condition of the horse, weight loss, dull coat, decreased energy.

### What you can do:

- **If the horse is actively colicking, call your veterinarian immediately.** Quick action can save your horse from more serious complications.
- **Psyllium** should be fed to prevent sand accumulation. Psyllium is available in pelleted form (Sand Clear, Equi Aid) or in powdered form (Metamucil). **Mix one scoop psyllium pellets or 1 cup powdered psyllium with a small amount of grain once daily for one week once a month.** Your veterinarian may recommend a longer course of treatment if your horse has a high sand load.
- Place your horse's feed in a container off of the ground. Rubber mats placed around the feeder prevent any feed spilled out of the feeder from mixing in with dirt and sand.

### • Test your horse's feces for sand at home:

1. Place a few fresh fecal balls in a plastic bag
  2. Fill the bag with enough water to completely cover the feces.
  3. Hang the bag for about 5 minutes, and any sand present in the feces will settle on the bottom of the bag.
  4. \*\*\*Absence of sand DOES NOT mean that your horse doesn't have sand in his intestines.
- Monitor your horse's fecal output and consistency.
  - Consult your veterinarian if your horse is showing any of the listed signs despite monthly treatment. Your horse may need more aggressive treatment performed by the vet. Treatment may include mineral oil administered through a nasogastric tube, pain medication, and even hospitalization with intravenous fluids if the condition is severe enough.

### What not to do:

- Do not give any other drugs/home remedies to the horse without first consulting with your vet.
- Do not try to give your horse oil. Unless a tube is passed by your vet, some of the oil you give will go into your horse's lungs which can cause fatal pneumonia.
- Do not pass anything (hand, hose, etc.) into the horse's rectum. The tissue of the rectum is very thin and you can easily tear the rectum, causing peritonitis and death in the horse.