

Choke

- An obstruction in the horse's esophagus.
- The horse is still able to breathe, but it is unable to swallow, and may become severely dehydrated.
- A secondary condition, aspiration pneumonia, may also develop if food material and saliva accumulate in the pharynx, spilling into the trachea and into the lungs.
- Most likely to occur when the horse is fed pellets or similar dry, coarse material such as hay leaf debris in the trailer manger or grass clippings.
- May occur in the trailer.
- Risk increases if the horse is slightly dehydrated.
- Risk increases if the horse bolts his feed or is competing for food.

Prevention

- Soak hay and hay cubes prior to feeding
- Place river rocks in grain mangers to prevent bolting of grain
- Don't feed grass clippings and dispose of hay leaf debris in trailer mangers and feed bags.

Signs

- Will not eat or drink
- Discharge of mucus mixed with green frothy material from nostrils
- Repeated gagging and coughing
- Distressed
- May act colicky
- Difficulty swallowing (horse may try to swallow without success)
- Extending the neck and head, usually in a downward direction
- Increased salivation, saliva drooling from the mouth
- Heart rate may increase slightly, due to the distress of the animal
- Occasionally, a lump on the side of the neck is visible or can be palpated, where the esophagus is blocked. This is normally most obvious on the left side of the neck.

First Aid

1. Withhold food and water
2. Place horse on incline with the head pointing down hill
3. Control inflammation: Administer 10 cc Banamine IV (see [Equine Medicines](#) instruction sheet)
4. If the horse begins showing interest in eating give a small **HANDFUL** of green grass.
5. Allow the horse to drink if he is interested.
6. If the horse can swallow that then continue SLOWLY feeding additional handfuls of grass.
7. The horse will cough and will continue to cough for awhile
8. If improvement is not seen in 1 – 1 ½ hours seek Veterinary assistance ASAP