

# **COMPLICATIONS AFTER ABDOMINAL (COLIC) SURGERY**

## **General Information**

**Colic surgery has been performed on horses by surgical teams for over 25 years. Success rates have improved markedly over the last decade; however, colic surgery is still considered serious surgery. The likelihood of recovery depends on the severity of the problem, the duration of colic before treatment was started, and lack of complications during surgery and anesthetic recovery.**

## **Complications of Colic Surgery**

**Complications generally occur at any of 3 critical times after colic surgery.**

- Within the first 48-72 hours after surgery, complications may be related to shock, such as laminitis, caused by the underlying gastrointestinal damage and the surgical procedure.**
- Within the first 5-10 days after surgery, complications may result from additional shock-related and abdominal problems, such as laminitis, intravenous catheter infection, peritoneal infection and infection of the surgical incision.**
- Long-term potential complications include suture reaction and subsequent need for suture removal, intestinal adhesions (bowel may adhere to other segments of bowel or other abdominal structures; this may cause colic and may require further surgery), recurrent colic, skin scarring and regrowth of white hair, and hernia formation at the surgical site (may require surgical repair).**

## **Postoperative Care**

**Instructions on postoperative incision care, feeding and exercise must be strictly followed. Generally, horses must be rested for 2-3 months after colic surgery. This includes no natural-cover breeding. This recovery time may have to be extended, depending on any complications that develop.**