

ESOPHAGEAL IMPACTION

(choke)

General Information

Choke is an impaction or obstruction of the esophagus, usually caused by a bolus or lump of food. It is not a tracheal (windpipe) obstruction, which impairs breathing. Your horse cannot swallow but can breath normally. A common sign of choke is food-stained saliva exiting the mouth and both nostrils.

Important Points in Treatment

- **Remove all feed and water**
- **Keep your horse in a stall or paddock free of any bedding, feed and water so your horse cannot eat, as any food could slide down the open windpipe, causing aspiration pneumonia.**
- **Patience is important. Choke usually resolved with routine medication. Intravenous fluids may be needed if the impaction continues for over 24 hours and dehydration becomes a problem.**
- **The impacted area of the esophagus can erode, forming an ulcer that heals with some constriction. This constriction could lead to recurrent choke or problems in swallowing feed.**
- **Surgery may damage the esophagus, leading to scarring and some constriction.**
- **After the choke has been resolved, provide soft feed, such as _____ for _____ days.**
- **Choke can recur. If eating too fast is a contributing cause, put some large (6-inch) stones in with the feed or put hay in a tight hay net (or bag) This forces the horse to eat slowly.**

Call Our Office If:

- **You have any questions concerning esophageal impaction.**
- **Your horse refused to eat or has difficulty swallowing after apparent recovery.**
- **Your horse develops a rectal temperature above 102 F.**