



HORSE EMERGENCY CHECKLIST

A practical barn reference for the first minutes of an emergency. Keep a printed copy with your first-aid kit.

PRIMARY VETERINARIAN	EMERGENCY / AFTER-HOURS
Name: _____	Clinic: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
TRAILER / TRANSPORT	NEAREST EQUINE HOSPITAL
Contact: _____	Hospital: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____

1. FIRST: KEEP EVERYONE SAFE

- ☐ Move people, dogs, and other horses away from danger.
- ☐ If safe, place the horse in a quiet area with secure footing.
- ☐ Do not position yourself where a painful or panicked horse can trap, strike, or kick you.
- ☐ Call your veterinarian early. Describe what happened, when it started, and what you are seeing.

2. QUICK ASSESSMENT

- ☐ Check attitude and responsiveness: bright, dull, anxious, weak, down, or unable to rise.
- ☐ Check for severe bleeding, obvious wounds, swelling, deformity, or an embedded object.
- ☐ Look at breathing: normal vs. labored, noisy, unusually fast, or nostrils flaring.
- ☐ Check gums: color, moisture, and capillary refill time.
- ☐ Take temperature, pulse/heart rate, and respiratory rate if safe.
- ☐ Listen for gut sounds on both sides if colic is suspected.
- ☐ Note manure and urination: normal, reduced, absent, diarrhea, blood, or straining.

Useful adult-horse baseline ranges

Temperature	About 99-101.5 F
Heart rate	About 28-44 beats/minute
Respiratory rate	About 8-16 breaths/minute
Capillary refill	Usually 1-2 seconds

Know your own horse's healthy baseline. Exercise, heat, excitement, age, and illness can change these values.

3. CALL THE VET URGENTLY FOR

- ☐ Uncontrolled or heavy bleeding.
- ☐ Difficulty breathing, collapse, seizure, severe weakness, or inability to stand.
- ☐ Suspected fracture, severe lameness, or a limb at an abnormal angle.
- ☐ Deep wound, puncture, wound over a joint/tendon, or exposed bone/tissue.
- ☐ Eye injury, swollen/closed eye, cloudiness, or sudden vision concern.
- ☐ Severe or persistent colic signs, repeated rolling, violent pain, or rapidly worsening discomfort.
- ☐ Choke signs: repeated swallowing, coughing, distress, or feed/saliva from the nostrils.
- ☐ Heat stress, very high temperature, neurologic signs, suspected poisoning, foaling emergency, or severe allergic reaction.

HORSE EMERGENCY CHECKLIST - ACTIONS & SUPPLIES

4. WHILE WAITING FOR THE VET

- ☐ Follow the veterinarian's instructions. Do not give medication unless directed or previously prescribed for that situation.
- ☐ Keep the horse as quiet as practical and minimize unnecessary movement.
- ☐ For bleeding, apply firm direct pressure with clean gauze or a clean towel. Do not repeatedly lift it to check.
- ☐ For a suspected fracture or severe limb injury, do not force the horse to walk unless directed.
- ☐ For an eye injury, prevent rubbing and keep the horse calm; do not apply random ointments.
- ☐ For a wound with an embedded object, do not remove it unless the veterinarian specifically directs you.
- ☐ For suspected colic, remove feed until you have spoken with your veterinarian; follow your vet's water instructions.
- ☐ Take photos/video if safe. Record times, vital signs, medications, manure, urination, and changes in behavior.

5. FIRST-AID KIT: KEEP ON HAND

- ☐ Digital thermometer with string/clip and lubricant.
- ☐ Stethoscope; clean exam gloves; disposable nitrile gloves.
- ☐ Sterile saline or wound-rinse solution.
- ☐ Sterile gauze pads, non-stick wound pads, roll gauze, and sheet cotton/quilted wraps.
- ☐ Cohesive flexible bandage wrap; standing bandages/stable wraps.
- ☐ Adhesive tape and duct tape.
- ☐ Bandage scissors and blunt-tip scissors.
- ☐ Clean towels; instant cold packs or access to ice.
- ☐ Flashlight/headlamp with spare batteries; hoof pick; clean bucket.
- ☐ Emergency contact card and medication list.
- ☐ Veterinarian-prescribed emergency medications, clearly labeled and within expiration date.

6. RECORD THIS BEFORE YOU NEED IT

- ☐ Horse's registered/barn name, age, sex, color, markings, and current photo.
- ☐ Current medications, supplements, allergies/sensitivities, and significant medical history.
- ☐ Tetanus vaccination date and relevant vaccination records.
- ☐ Insurance company, policy number, and emergency claim instructions if insured.
- ☐ Trailer location, tow vehicle access, keys, and at least one backup transporter.
- ☐ Directions and gate/access instructions for emergency responders or veterinarians.

Emergency notes

Time	Observation / vital sign / instruction
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Important: This checklist is a general preparedness guide, not a substitute for veterinary diagnosis or treatment. If you are unsure whether a situation is an emergency, call your veterinarian.