

# When to Call the Vet

Chapter 10

*Three levels of urgency. When you are uncertain, call — a two-minute phone call is almost always the right choice.*

## CALL IMMEDIATELY — do not wait for morning, do not watch overnight

- Signs of colic that do not resolve within 30 minutes, or that are worsening
- Non-weight-bearing lameness
- A wound that is deep, near a joint, or actively bleeding and not controllable
- Eye injury, or sudden cloudiness, discharge, or squinting
- Difficulty breathing
- A temperature above 103 degrees
- Collapse, or inability to rise
- Any suspected neurological signs such as stumbling, incoordination, or head tilt

**And any situation where your gut tells you something is seriously wrong. Trust that instinct.**

## CALL DURING BUSINESS HOURS and schedule an evaluation

- Mild, consistent lameness without obvious cause, persisting more than 24 to 48 hours
- A new lump, bump, or swelling that is not hot and not causing lameness
- Skin conditions or coat changes you cannot identify
- Gradual weight loss over days or weeks
- Changes in manure consistency that persist more than a day
- Any behavioural change you cannot attribute to a training or management cause

## WATCH AND MONITOR

- Very mild intermittent lameness in a horse who is otherwise bright, alert, eating and drinking normally, with no heat or swelling, that you can reasonably attribute to a specific cause such as a hard workout or uneven footing

**With the understanding that it should improve, not worsen, over the next 24 hours.**

**The question to ask is not whether you can afford to wait. It is whether the horse can.**

## HAVE THIS READY BEFORE YOU DIAL

Your veterinarian will ask for all of it. Writing it down while you wait for the callback keeps you useful instead of frantic.

- ☐ The time you first noticed something was wrong
- ☐ Vital signs, if you can safely take them
- ☐ What he last ate, and when
- ☐ Manure output over the last 24 hours, and whether it looks normal
- ☐ Water intake, and whether the bucket or trough is down
- ☐ Any medication given, and at what time
- ☐ What has changed recently: feed, turnout, workload, a new horse, a move