

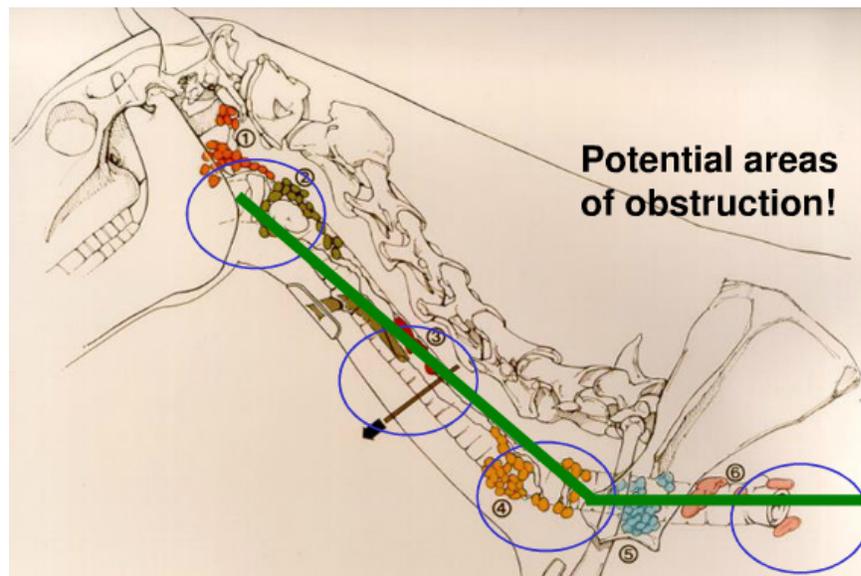
Feeding Practices and Techniques to Prevent Choke in Horses

What is “choking” in horses?

Choke is correctly named Esophageal Obstruction as it is a blockage in the windpipe. Horses are unable to vomit so they become distressed and it can become quite serious. In the majority of cases, this blockage is food but is also can be the result of tumors or fibrosis in association with injury to the area.

How do I know my horse is choking?

The horse will cough and retch in order to try and dislodge the blockage as result discharge and food may be seen coming from the nose and mouth of the horse. If the horse is unable to remove the blockage, they become distressed and panic. Arching of the head and the neck in attempts to swallow is a clear distress signal. In older horses choke can be the result of a dental issue meaning they are unable to chew their food properly and therefore swallow large lumps of hard food. Sometimes the lump of food can be seen or felt at the side of the neck.



If your horse appears to be choking, there are a few practices which may enable movement or removal of the obstruction. In mild cases saliva production by the horse will eventually lubricate the esophagus and allow passage for the blockage. In other cases the horse is sedated so as to allow for the relaxation of the esophagus releasing the blockage.

In more severe cases the horse will require a stomach tube in order to physically move the blockage or using water in conjunction with the tube, flush the blockage out. If the horse is stressed and begins to panic some vets will anaesthetize the horse.

For more information or to order CoolStance/PowerStance, please call 803-647-1200 or e-mail Claudia@stanceglobal.com

After the blockage has been removed it is important to feed only sloppy wet feeds such as soaked copra or soggy grass as the horses throat will endure some swelling which can cause secondary cases if feed dry hard feed.

What causes Choke in horses?

Choke is often the result of dry feed combining with saliva and becoming swollen. One of the classic causes is un-soaked sugar beet which can swell to three times the size once combined with moisture. Feeding an exhausted horse can also cause problems as they tend not to chew properly so it is best to make sure that food for older or exhausted horses is wet, sloppy and easy to swallow. Feeding behavior can also be a factor in choke as some horses eat too fast and swallow large lumps of food. This behavior can be habit or it can be the result of eating in the presence of other horses where they feel threatened. For horses that are prone to choke there are some management techniques that can be used in order to avoid recurrence;

1. Avoid feeding dry feed
2. Isolate horse prone to choke and feed them on their own
3. Feed several small feeds throughout the day instead of fewer large meals
4. Place a large object in the horses feed bin so they are forced to eat slowly

It is important to check your horses teeth on a regular basis and if the horse has a suspected mouth/cheek/tongue injury. All these factors can reduce the horses ability to chew properly and cause choke.

How diet helps choke in horses

To help prevent choke provide you horse with feeds that can be wet down or softened prior to feeding. CoolStance coconut meal can be fed wet to create a soft mash that can hold more than double its weight in water. This is a useful feeding method for horses that suffer from choke or try to gorge their feeds. The consistency of wet CoolStance mash is also gentle on your horses teeth and throat.

Recommended Stance Horse Feed for Choke in horses

All Stance Equine feeds can be fed dry or wet down into a soft mash:

CoolFibre provides very low, non NSC energy and quality fiber suitable for insulin resistant, Cushings and EMS horses. CoolFibre absorbs water to assist with intestinal function and metabolism in metabolically stressed horses. (Not available in the US)

CoolStance provides <12% NSC, and is fed to most horses together with medium quality hay.

PowerStance is powdered coconut oil, and is fed as a supplement to provide Medium Chain Triglycerides, which provide readily digestible energy, and may preserve gut health.

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