

Surgery

When surgery is required, in most instances, the horse is anesthetized and positioned in dorsal recumbency, and the surgical incision is made on the ventral midline. Once the peritoneal cavity is entered, portions of the intestine should be examined to determine the definitive cause of the colic. Correction may involve repositioning a displaced portion of intestine, removing an obstruction, or resecting devitalized intestine. When devitalized segments of intestine must be removed or an enterotomy performed, postoperative care may include antibiotics, IV fluids, polymyxin B, antibodies directed against endotoxin, and NSAIDs to combat endotoxemia. When a displaced segment of intestine is simply returned to its normal location, the postoperative care is much less intense. Each horse must be handled individually, and its treatment needs are based on the response to surgery and development of complications.