

DRESSAGE, EVENTING, HUNTERS, JUMPERS

VOL. 3

# PRACTICAL HORSEMAN EXTRA

**RYAN WOOD**

**Build Confidence  
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# BUILD CONFIDENCE OVER CORNERS

Top eventer Ryan Wood shares his three-step plan to successfully introduce this cross-country obstacle to your horse.

**By Ryan Wood ■ Photos by Amy K. Dragoo**

Corner fences are a common element seen on nearly every cross-country course in America. Starting at Training level, horses and riders need to be prepared to answer the corner question. When introducing riders and young horses to corners, I use the same approach each time, starting by building a simulated corner in the arena to introduce the concept and then moving to jumping an actual corner on a cross-country course.

Whether you are training for dressage, show jumping or cross country, there is always a progression. You start with the basics and gradually work your way up, and it is no different when jumping corners. First, you need to have the correct seat, leg and hand aids in place, which I describe in the next section. Then you build confidence by jumping a simulated corner in the arena using a barrel and two standards, which will set you up for success when you leave the comfort zone of the arena and jump a corner on the cross-country course.



**When introducing corners, the key to remember is that jumping corners is all about progression. First you need to establish the correct canter on the flat and then work over a simulated corner in the arena before heading out to jump a corner on a cross-country course. Only then will your horse jump it as confidently as the Hanoverian gelding Alcatraz is jumping it here.**



## Step 1: Develop the Correct Canter

Jumping corners confidently starts with having the right canter. A corner is an accuracy test, and for these types of questions I like to tone down the between-the-fences gallop to a slower speed in the approach. You still want a forward, positive canter, but approaching at a slower pace gives your horse more time to see the fence and understand the question. Before working on the corner in the arena, practice this canter, focusing on your aids. The combination of seat, leg and hand aids you use approaching the corner will give your horse every opportunity to confidently jump it.



You can practice developing the correct canter in the arena or wherever you do your gallops. I start by working in the between-the-fences pace I use while going cross country—galloping forward at a faster speed. You will be in two-point with your seat out of the saddle and your knee at a 110-degree angle. Be sure to shorten your stirrup leathers enough so you can keep your backside off the saddle in your two-point.



Now I start to bring my upper body back and slow Alcatraz from the gallop to a positive, forward canter. This is the canter I establish before a corner. To practice, pick a marker in your gallop field, like a tree or jump. Practice slowing from your gallop to your desired canter by the time you pass the marker. Depending on how quickly you are able to slow and balance your horse, you might need to start well back from the marker. The more you practice, the easier it will be to make that transition.



Then I sit firmly in the saddle in a defensive seat, bringing my upper body back so it is upright. My legs are in a steady, driving contact with Alcatraz's sides—I think Phillip Dutton and his vise-grip legs—which makes it clear to Alcatraz that I want him to go forward confidently. This is the position I use four to five strides in front of the corner.



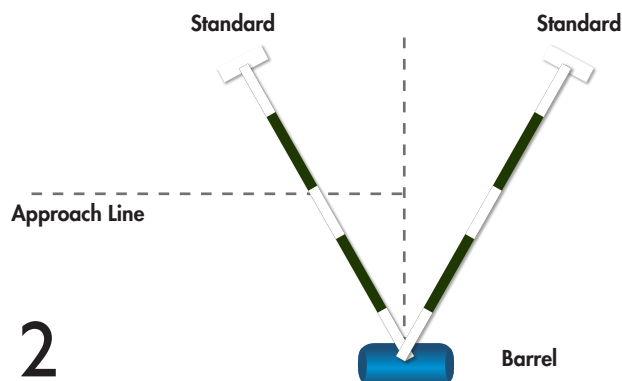
As I bring my seat closer to the saddle, I move both of my hands several inches wider apart to create a channel for Alcatraz's shoulders. This is the hand position I use in the approach to the corner to encourage him to hold his line. This hand position and driving leg aid will send him forward and make it very clear that you want him to jump the corner.



## Step 2: Practice a Corner in the Arena



**SETUP >>** Build the simulated corner in your arena so you have enough space to jump it in both directions: Lay a barrel on its side. About 10 feet from it, place two standards close together with cups facing the barrel. (They can be closer than this depending on your level.) Rest one end of a 12-foot pole on the barrel and put the other end in the cup. Do this with the second pole and standard. Place a ground line at the base of each vertical. Put one end of the last pole on the front of the barrel and the other end of the pole on the ground, angled to the outside of the jump at approximately 100–110 degrees. This will act as a wing (or guide rail) to direct the horse and encourage him to jump.



**WHERE TO FOCUS >>** To determine what part of the corner to focus on and jump, bisect the angle, imagining a line that cuts it in half from the widest point of the corner to the tip. In the center of that line, picture another line running toward you at a 90-degree angle. This is the line of your approach. The aim is to pick a “window” on the corner that includes the narrowest part of the corner—without risking a runout—and the widest part of the corner—without asking too much of a scope question for your horse. Approaching the corner in the middle of that window gives you room for error if your horse drifts on approach.



I lowered the front pole of the corner from the cup to the ground. This creates a softer face on the corner and helps Alcatraz to understand the concept of jumping it. At this point, it is useful to have a helper on the ground who can place the poles in and out of the cups and change the placement of the wing pole. About five strides before the corner, I dropped into a defensive seat in the saddle—sitting and bringing my upper body upright. I also made sure my legs were firmly on his sides and widened my hands. The combination of leg, seat and hand aids applied together has allowed Alcatraz to confidently jump the corner. (He was a little fresh this day, which is why I am using a short release here.)





Alcatraz quickly becomes unimpressed with this corner. If he were less experienced, I would make sure he had jumped the corner confidently with the front rail lowered in both directions. If he is hesitant, I will continue to jump with the front rail lowered until he jumps confidently. Then my helper would put the front rail into the cup and I would approach again, as I'm doing here, using the same seat, leg and hand aids as I did in Photo 3 on page 5 along with the guide rail to make it very clear to Alcatraz that I want him to jump the corner.

After Alcatraz confidently jumps with the guide rail, my helper removes it and I approach the corner in the same way I did before: defensive seat in the saddle, legs firmly on his sides with wider-set hands.

**TIP >>** The progression to jumping the fence as a full corner might not happen in one jump school. For the first school, you might start with the front rail angled down to the ground and a wing pole to guide the horse (see photo 3 on page 5). For the second school, you might review the first school briefly, then if your horse jumps confidently, put the pole back in the cup while still using a wing pole. For the third jump school, you can take away the wing.



Now Alcatraz is ready to jump the corner at a higher height, which will prepare him for the size of the actual corner once we go out to the cross-country course.

**TIP >>** Horses and riders will progress at different rates when it comes to jumping a corner in the arena. The key is to advance at a pace that builds confidence in both you and your horse. If it takes three or more jump schools to reach this point, the time spent in the arena doing your homework is worth it.



## Step 3: Jump a Cross-Country Corner

### WHEN IS IT TIME TO MOVE TO CROSS COUNTRY?

>> After enough jump schools in the arena with your horse jumping the simulated corner in both directions without a wing pole—he should be jumping without any hesitation—it's time to head out on the cross-country course. Be sure to build your simulated corner so it will resemble the same height and width of the corner in your cross-country field. If you don't have a corner at home, try and make sure the course you trailer to has good footing and isn't too muddy so your horse won't slip and lose confidence as he is still learning. Also ensure that your corner is staked into the ground so it can't move if your horse knocks it with one of his legs. When you head out to a cross-country corner, bring a pole to create a wing on the corner and have your ground person place it on the tip of the corner at approximately a 110-degree angle like you did in the ring.



I warmed up by practicing the different canters and aids described on page 4 and then I jump him over some simpler fences—a log, coop and table—to make sure he is jumping straight and without hesitation. Then I pick up my between-the-fences gallop, get into a two-point position and approach the corner.

### Troubleshooting

Understand that your aids play an all-important role in successfully jumping corners. If you canter down to the corner too fast, the horse can misread the question. If you come in too weak and on a loose rein, you increase your chance of a runout. If a runout happens, think about what happened and why. Did you approach the jump on the wrong line, maybe at too severe an angle, so your horse didn't understand the question? Were your hands not set wide enough to create a tunnel? Were you in a galloping position as opposed to a defensive seat? Did you have both legs firmly on your horse's sides to encourage him to go forward?

If your horse runs out while schooling corners on cross country, bring the wing pole back to return him to familiar territory he understands. It's also a good idea to jump another fence, like a table or log, that you know your horse will be confident over before coming back to the corner. This gets his mind back to thinking about going from one side of the jump to the other.

If your horse still runs out after bringing the wing pole back, it is often easier to fix the problem in the arena as opposed to on the cross-country course. Go back to repeating the earlier steps in this exercise there. Place a wing pole on the simulated corner in the arena, drop the front rail to the ground and then start over building it back up.



Several strides in front of the corner, I brought Alcatraz back from a between-the-fences gallop to a forward, positive canter by lowering into my light seat. Now, about four strides before corner, I sit in the saddle and bring my upper body back so it's close to upright. I also keep my legs firmly on Alcatraz's side and widen my hands.



## Step 3: Jump a Cross-Country Corner



Our progression pays off. Alcatraz jumps confidently and in good form. I am using an automatic release to maintain the contact with Alcatraz's mouth. I jump the corner once more in the same direction to be sure it wasn't a fluke. He again jumps confidently, so I have my helper switch the wing pole, and we jump the corner in the other direction. Soon we are ready to jump the corner without the guide rail as we are doing on page 3. Mission accomplished!

**TIP >>** If at any time you don't feel confident, remember that this exercise is about progression. Continue using the wing pole in your jump schools on the cross-country course. Once you feel ready to take the next step, remove the wing pole and conquer the corner in both directions. 🐾

Australian native **Ryan Wood** grew up in Pony Club and started competing in eventing at 8 years old. He purchased his first horse, an Australian Stock Horse named Countdown, through a local newspaper for \$1,000. Ryan and Countdown moved up through the levels of eventing together, completing their first CCI\*\*\*\* at Adelaide when they were both 19 years old.

Ryan competed successfully throughout Australia, garnering top placings at Melbourne CCI\*\*\*, Sydney CCI\*\*\* and Warwick CIC-W\*\*\*. He trained with and worked for numerous top riders, including Australian eventer Guy Wallace, Olympic dressage trainer Norbert Van Laak and top champion show jumpers Ludger Beerbaum and Ernst Hofschröer.

Ryan moved to the United States in 2008 and started working for Bruce Davidson before moving to Phillip Dutton's True Prospect Farm in Unionville, Pennsylvania. He now runs his own business out of True Prospect Farm. Since moving to the U.S. Ryan has become one of the top event riders in the country. In 2019, he placed first in the Virginia Horse Trials International CCI\*\*-L, the Fair Hill International Open Intermediate division and The Fork CCI\*\*-S.



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# UNDERSTANDING ULCERS

Ulcers can be a common problem for many horses, especially those with active careers. Learn how to recognize the signs, treat the symptoms and keep this problem from recurring.

**By Elaine Pascoe with Frank Andrews, DVM, MS, DAVIM, LVMA**



**Large grade 3/3 ulcers in the nonglandular stomach at the greater curvature. Horses with severe ulcers can show no clinical signs or can show signs of slow eating, poor appetite, lethargy and colic.**

**Y**our horse used to scour his feed bucket clean at every meal, but now he picks at his grain. He's dropped a little weight, too. He acts resentful when you tack him up and he's sluggish when you ride. What's his problem?

While any number of issues could cause those worrisome signs, stomach ulcers are high on the list. Stomach (gastric) ulcers are surprisingly common in horses, and they've been linked to everything from poor performance to colic. But a better understanding of how and why horses get ulcers has brought advances in treating and managing the problem. In this article, Frank Andrews, DVM, MS, DAVIM, helps bring you up to date. A leading equine-ulcer researcher, Dr. Andrews is a professor and director of the Equine Health Studies Program at Louisiana State University's School of Veterinary Medicine and serves on the Equine Committee of the Louisiana Veterinary Medical Association.





**Horses are grazers by nature and their digestive systems aren't designed for an intermittent feeding schedule, therefore the less access they have to pasture, the more likely they are to develop gastric ulcers.**

The stomach isn't the only part of the horse's digestive system that can develop ulcers. Hindgut (or colonic) ulcers are less common than gastric ulcers, Dr. Andrews says, but they can cause serious problems. See "Hindgut Ulcers" on page 15.

## ACID ATTACK

Gastric ulcers are sores in the lining of the stomach. In horses they were a hidden problem—quite literally—before the late 1980s, when development of the gastric endoscope allowed veterinarians to peer directly into the stomach. The scope revealed that gastric ulcers are much more common in horses than in humans, affecting up to 90 percent of racehorses and more than half of sporthorses.

Equine ulcers differ from human ulcers

in several important ways. Infection with *Helicobacter* bacteria often triggers gastric ulcers in people, but so far there's no evidence of this in horses, Dr. Andrews says. Instead, lifestyle seems to be a major factor. The routines and feeding regimens you impose on your horse can conflict with the way his digestive system works.

Here's why: Your horse is a grazer, and his digestive system is built to handle a steady intake of forage. His stomach constantly produces acidic digestive juices—more than six cups an hour. Chewed forage arrives in the stomach mixed with saliva, which contains acid-buffering bicarbonates. As long as he's grazing, his intake soaks up the juices and keeps acid levels in check.

Your stomach, in contrast, is a batch

processor—acid production ramps up at mealtime and falls off in between. Your stomach also has a protective mucous lining called the glandular mucosa, which shields it from acids. Your horse has that type of lining only in the lower part of his stomach, while the lining in the upper (squamous or nonglandular) part is not so well protected. About 80 percent of gastric ulcers in adult horses occur in this upper region and exposure to acid is the main cause.

## WHO'S AT RISK?

Horses of any age and any breed can develop ulcers, Dr. Andrews says, but some horses are more likely than others to be plagued by this problem. Answering six questions will help you assess your horse's risk:

*How much time does he spend at pasture?*

The less access a horse has to pasture, the more likely he is to develop gastric ulcers. That's because his system isn't designed





**ABOVE:** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can be a contributing factor to the development of equine gastric ulcers, especially when they're used long-term.

**LEFT:** Horses who trailer have a higher risk of developing ulcers due to the stress of travel and their decreased intake of feed and water.

for an intermittent feeding schedule and his stomach acid levels rise quickly without a steady intake of forage and acid-buffering saliva.

*How hard—and how often—does he work?* There's a direct link between exercise levels and risk of gastric ulcers. This may be partly because the stomach is compressed during exercise, so acidic juices are more likely to contact the unprotected upper walls. Researchers have also found that stomach acidity increases when horses run on a treadmill. This helps explain why horses in racing and high-level training face the highest ulcer risks.

*What's in his bucket?* High-starch grains and concentrates like sweet feed may increase stomach acidity. These feeds contain soluble carbohydrates that are converted to simple sugars. Bacteria normally present in the stomach ferment these sugars and produce volatile fatty acids and other byproducts that can work with stomach acids to damage the stomach lining. Adding to the problem, a horse that gets big rations of concentrates is less likely to nibble forage between feedings.

*What's in his medicine chest?* Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as phenylbutazone (bute) and flunixin meglumine (Banamine®) can contribute to ulcers, generally when they're given at high doses or over a long time. NSAIDs work by inhibiting a group of body chemicals, prostaglandins. Some prostaglandins are involved in

inflammation, but others help protect the stomach lining by inhibiting acid production and encouraging production of protective mucus. If those "good" prostaglandins are blocked, ulcer risk increases. In particular, Dr. Andrews says, these drugs have been linked to ulcers in the normally protected glandular mucosa.

*What's his travel schedule?* Shipping increases the likelihood and severity of gastric ulcers. Several factors may be in-

✦ **Because a horse's lifestyle plays such a big role in triggering ulcers, management is vital in dealing with the problem. Simple changes in your horse's diet and routine can improve healing.**

volved, including the stress of transport and the fact that horses consume less water and feed on the road.

*What's his stress level?* Stress makes gastric ulcers more likely. Horses can be stressed by illness, pain, training demands, shipping and sources you may not be aware of. For many horses daily life is stressful, although it may not seem that way to you. Horses evolved living in herds, constantly grazing and moving freely from place to place. Stress from confinement and lack of social contact with other horses may help explain why horses that are stalled are more likely to develop ulcers than horses at pasture. Some horses

handle these stresses better than others, so temperament is also a factor.

## WHAT YOU'LL SEE

How will you know if your horse develops gastric ulcers? The signs can be frustratingly vague and they vary from horse to horse. You may notice:

- He loses his appetite. He eats slowly and leaves food in the bottom of his bucket.
- He loses weight and suddenly develops

a poor coat.

- He spends more time lying down.
- He stretches often to urinate, a possible sign of gastric discomfort.
- He colics. Recurrent colic, mild or severe, is common with gastric ulcers.
- His manner changes. He develops a sour attitude in work or seems dull and lethargic.
- His performance level slips.

All these signs can be produced by other problems and many of them are subtle. In fact, a horse with a high tolerance for pain may show few signs. So how can you find out for certain if your horse has gastric ulcers? Gastroscopy—an endoscopic exam—is the only way. This proce-





**An endoscopic exam, a gastroscopy, performed by your veterinarian at your barn or a clinic is the best way to discover if your horse might have gastric ulcers.**

procedure may require a trip to a clinic that has the flexible 3-meter fiberoptic scope used for the exam, Dr. Andrews says, although some veterinarians have portable units for on-farm use. The veterinarian inserts the scope into the horse's nostril, down his esophagus and into the stomach. If ulcers are present, their severity can be rated on a standard scale. That will give the vet a point of reference for follow-up exams.

The good news is that ulcers are usually treatable. Medication and management are the keys.

## MEDICATION

The ulcer medications that are most used for horses work by blocking production of stomach acids, which then give the ulcers a chance to heal. Omeprazole, the active ingredient in GastroGard® for horses and Prilosec for people, is the

drug of choice, Dr. Andrews says.

It's a proton-pump inhibitor, meaning that it blocks the mechanism through which the stomach produces acid. It's given once a day in an oral paste, at a dosage rate of 4 milligrams per kilogram, for up to four weeks. GastroGard is currently the only drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for treating ulcers in horses. But it's expensive—a month's treatment for a full-size horse can cost more than \$1,000. Generic versions have come on the market, but as of this writing none has FDA approval. In 2015 the FDA cracked down on nine firms marketing "unlicensed and adulterated" omeprazole products for horses. Some of the products contained far less omeprazole than the amount listed on their labels.

Ranitidine (Zantac® in human medicine) blocks the action of histamine, a body chemical that stimulates acid production in the stomach. Dosage varies with the case, but as you might suppose a horse needs significantly more than you do. Ranitidine is usually given three times



© PAULA DA SILVA/ARNOLD

**A sudden negative change in your horse's demeanor could mean he's suffering from gastric ulcers.**

hydroxide (Maalox®) and calcium carbonate? These drugs neutralize rather than suppress stomach acid. They can help, but they're not widely used in horses for practical reasons. It takes about a cupful of an extra-strength oral antacid (such as Maalox Therapeutic Strength®) to lower a horse's stomach acid for a few hours, researchers have found, and that massive dose would have to be given four times a day to combat ulcers. Good luck getting the horse to cooperate.

Acid-blocking drugs are effective for the most common ulcers, which are those in the upper, nonglandular stomach wall. Ulcers that develop in the mucous lining of the lower stomach respond to a different drug, sucralfate. This medication binds to the mucous lining, acting like a bandage at the ulcer site and enhancing mucus production. The drug also has some antibacterial properties.

Since bacteria aren't known to cause ulcers in horses, antibiotics aren't a standard part of treatment. However, antibiotics can help in some cases, Dr. Andrews says. Bacteria are naturally present in the horse's stomach. When ulcers form, harmful bacteria (other than the *Helicobacter* species that cause ulcers in people) may colonize the sores and interfere with healing. Combining antibiotic and antacid

a day for three to four weeks. The cost is typically about half the cost of treatment with GastroGard, but the effects vary from horse to horse, Dr. Andrews says. He adds that another histamine blocker, cimetidine (Tagament®), has not proved effective in treating ulcers in horses, so it's not recommended.

What about over-the-counter antacids such as magnesium hydroxide, aluminum





**Alfalfa hay can be a good choice for buffering gastric acid, and offering small portions or a grass-alfalfa mix as part of your horse's daily forage rations can help keep acid levels low.**

treatment sometimes helps these horses, who tend to have recurring ulcer problems. Boosting beneficial bacteria with probiotics, especially products containing *Lactobacillus*, may also help. *Lactobacillus* bacteria may be able to replace the harmful bacteria that colonize ulcers and stimulate healing.

## MANAGEMENT

Because a horse's lifestyle plays such a big role in triggering ulcers, management is vital in dealing with the problem. Simple changes in your horse's diet and routine can improve healing. Remembering to make any feed changes gradually, give him:

- **More forage.** Maximize grazing time, and feed free-choice hay when your horse isn't on grass. Keeping some forage in his stomach will lower the risk that stomach acids will injure the stomach lining.
- **Alfalfa.** Alfalfa hay is especially good at buffering acid, Dr. Andrews says. The effects are released slowly as the hay is digested, lasting up to five hours. Free-choice alfalfa would be too rich, but offering some alfalfa or a grass-alfalfa mix as part of his total ration, in evenly

spaced feedings, could help keep acid levels in check.

- **Less grain.** Feed concentrates only to provide calories that the horse can't get from hay. Divide his grain ration into three or four small feedings a day, spaced at least five hours apart, to avoid high levels of volatile fatty acids.

- **A little fat.** If he's getting sweet feed or a similar feed that's high in soluble carbohydrates, switch to a high-fat complete feed. Or use a commercial complete feed plus a fat supplement to provide calories with less stomach acidity.

- **More downtime.** Time off, or at least cutting back on exercise and training, will give the ulcers a chance to heal. Avoid shipping and other stresses and increase turnout time.

- **No NSAIDs.** Avoiding these drugs will help the ulcers heal. If your horse needs anti-inflammatory medication, talk to your vet about other choices.

## MAINTENANCE

Ulcers tend to recur, especially when contributing factors (like stress from training, transport and showing) remain

part of the horse's life. Making the feed and lifestyle changes listed permanent will help keep them away. Still, some horses may benefit from preventive medication or supplements even after their ulcers heal.

Daily omeprazole at one-fourth of the treatment dose is effective for this, Dr. Andrews says. (A low-dose version of GastroGard is sold as UlcerGard® for preventive use; the medication in the tubes is the same strength, but the dose markings are different.) "We don't know of any negative

long-term effects" of continued administration, Dr. Andrews says. However, studies haven't looked at administration for periods longer than 90 days. Daily doses for shorter periods at stressful times—before, during and after a show, for example—might help prevent a relapse, but that also hasn't been studied.

Many feed supplements claim to promote gastric health and alleviate or prevent ulcers in horses, but only few have research to back up the claims. Researchers at LSU found that a supplement containing a blend of stomach-coating ingredients (pectin, lecithin, beta-glucan) and acid-buffering ingredients (sodium bicarbonate, alfalfa meal) failed to prevent ulcers but did reduce the severity of the lesions after 35 days of treatment. Another LSU study found that a supplement containing a proprietary blend of sea buckthorn, glutamine, aloe vera, pectin and lecithin helps keep ulcers at bay after treatment with GastroGard.

"Ulcers should be treated with GastroGard first and then the horse can be evaluated for the best preventive measures," Dr. Andrews says. 🐾

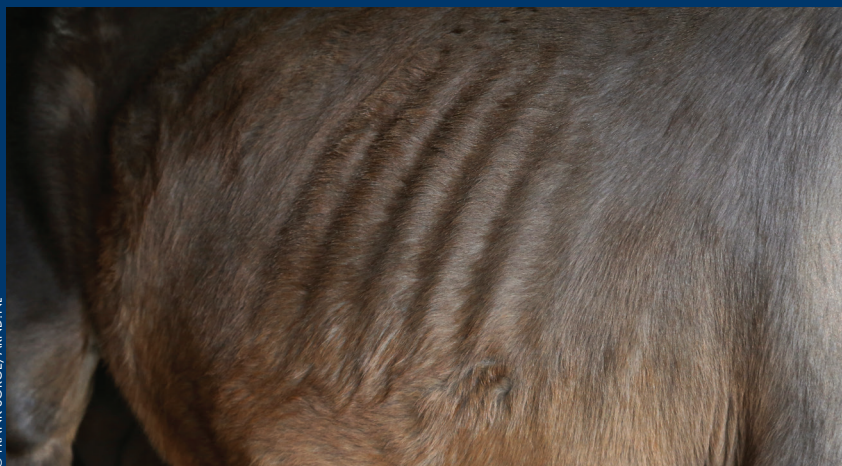


# HINDGUT ULCERS

Hindgut (colonic) ulcers—lesions that develop in the large colon—can have a big impact on your horse's health. They're less common than gastric ulcers, but they're trickier to diagnose and treat.

Any horse can get hindgut ulcers, but certain factors increase the risk:

- long-term treatment with NSAIDs (especially phenylbutazone). This is probably the most common trigger.
- stress
- dehydration
- for broodmares, an intensive breeding or pregnancy schedule or a postpartum uterine infection.



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**Signs of hindgut ulcers can include weight loss and a lackluster coat.**

As with gastric ulcers, the signs of hindgut ulcers are often vague. You may see intermittent colic or diarrhea, lack of appetite or dramatic weight loss, a dull coat, lethargy or swelling (edema). The swelling occurs as proteins leak from blood through the horse's inflamed gut wall. Some of these proteins help maintain the balance of fluids in blood, and their loss allows fluid to seep from the blood vessels into surrounding tissues. Fluid buildup then creates swelling under the horse's skin, in the legs and even around the lungs.

There are no definitive tests for hindgut ulcers, but these can provide clues:

- Blood tests may show low protein concentrations (especially low levels of albumin) and sometimes other abnormalities, such as anemia.
- An ultrasound scan of the right dorsal colon may reveal thickening and swelling due to inflammation.
- Fecal tests can reveal occult blood, which could be a sign of gastric or colonic ulcers. However, a negative test doesn't rule out either condition.
- Gastroscopy can be done to detect gastric ulcers, which often produce similar signs. A horse may have both types of ulcers at the same time.

The first step in treatment is to remove the potential causes. Stop NSAIDs, back off intensive training and other sources of stress and provide plenty of clean water at all times as well as a free-choice mineral/salt mix, to ensure that the horse stays hydrated.

Acid-blocking drugs like omeprazole are not as helpful for hindgut ulcers

as they are for gastric ulcers, but your veterinarian may suggest other medications. For example, sucralfate can coat the gut wall, giving colonic ulcers a chance to heal.

Synthetic prostaglandins such as misoprostol (Cytotec®) may be helpful, Dr. Frank Andrews says. "Colonic ulcers might be caused by a depletion or blockade [through stress or the use of NSAIDs] of the good prostaglandins which help protect the colon," he explains. Misoprostol has been shown to help with ulcers in dogs and humans and it may do the same for horses.

Changes in the horse's feeding program can promote healing, too. Talk to your veterinarian about:

- Restricting or eliminating hay. Less bulk and abrasiveness eases digestion in the colon while the ulcers heal. Your horse still needs fiber, though. Provide it by switching him to a pelleted complete feed with an alfalfa base containing at least 30 percent fiber. Make the change in feed gradually and reintroduce hay as he recovers.

- Adding psyllium. Supplements containing psyllium musilloids lubricate the colon and keep things moving along. They can also help reduce inflammation in your horse's colon.

- Adding omega fatty acids. Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids promote healing. Provide up to a cup a day of corn, flaxseed, safflower or canola oil mixed with feed.

- Adding a supplement with ingredients that encourage hindgut health. For example, yeast extracts are thought to support beneficial bacteria in the hindgut, and amino acids such as glutamine and threonine are thought to support a healthy mucous lining throughout the digestive tract.

Follow-up blood work and other tests will help your veterinarian track your horse's recovery.