

## FACT SHEET

### Sand Colic

Sand colic is abdominal pain caused by accumulation of sand in the intestinal tract of the horse. Horses accumulate sand through ingestion. Sand can accumulate suddenly or over many years, potentially leading to a life-threatening impaction. Some horses with sand accumulation will appear dull, may have intermittent diarrhoea, or be a bit pot-bellied while others will appear perfectly healthy until an acute colic event. Sand accumulation can be diagnosed with abdominal radiographs (a service not offered by our clinic) or listening with a stethoscope. Just because sand isn't heard on auscultation does not always guarantee that there isn't a sand problem.

To help prevent sand colic, please consider the following:

- **NOT FEEDING ON THE GROUND:** While this may seem like common sense, it can sometimes be easier said than done. Consider hanging feed bags/hay nets or feeding on a regularly cleaned rubber mat. Additionally, rubber mats should be placed under feed bags or hay nets to prevent horses from picking food up from directly off the ground
- **INCREASING DIETARY FIBRE:** Fibre has two main effects to aid sand colic, bulking out the colon to aid removal of sand, and making the horse feel full so they aren't as likely to pick at feed close to the ground. Fibre can be fed in the form of hay, chaff, beet pulp or soy and lupin hulls
- **INTERMITTENT FEEDING OF PSYLLIUM:** When ingested psyllium forms a gel which anecdotally helps remove sand from the gut. If feeding psyllium, it's important to only feed for 5 days out of the month. The reason for this is if psyllium is fed for longer than this, the horse's gut microbiome becomes accustomed to it, and it will start to digest it before it can be used to clear sand
- **DRENCHING:** If your horses are high-risk for sand colic (bare sandy paddocks, previous episodes of sand colic, sand accumulation confirmed by a vet) it is worth considering having your horses drenched by a vet with Epsom salts and psyllium husk for 3-5 days. This drench mixture draws moisture into the gut, decreasing transit time to help shift sand out of the intestine. This is the most scientifically sound way to remove sand from a horse's gut

If your horse is actively colicking, this is a veterinary emergency, and a vet should be contacted ASAP regardless of time or day. Our clinic offers a 24 hour emergency service, and can be contacted on 0428 834 706

If you have any questions regarding sand colic and the level of risk for your horses, please contact either our Naracoorte or Penola clinics to speak to our experienced team. Further information can be found on our website.