Colic Part 2 – What is my Vet Feeling in There?

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The rectal examination - outline

• Before we start; some things to consider
• Preparing the horse
• Performing the examination
  – A laparoscopy guided tour
Before we start;
some things to consider
When do we perform a rectal examination?

• Indications
  – Reproductive evaluations – male and female
  – Acute and chronic colic
  – Weight loss
  – “The sick horse”
  – Metastasis check
  – Urinary disorders
  – Lameness – upper hind limb, obscure, fractures
  – Others??
The value of the rectal exam?

RISK vs BENEFIT

• Risks
  – To the horse?
  – To the vet?
  – To the owner?

• Benefits
  – To the horse?
  – To the vet?
  – To the owner?
Rectal tears

- Arabians and older horses increased risk, Miniatures
- Excessive straining may play a role
- Good restraint/sedation is important
- Blood on sleeve after examination
- 4 grades – can be life threatening
- Grades 3 and 4 – action required
Preparing the horse
Restraint

• Physical
  – Stocks
  – Stall door
  – Nose twitch or lip chain

• Chemical
  – Alpha-2 agonists
  – Opioid
  – Buscopan
  – Epidural anesthesia
  – Lidocaine per rectum

\[\text{Sedation}\]
Performing the rectal exam
A laparoscope guided tour of what your vet is feeling in there!!!
Left side – hand in rectum
Left side – initial view
Left side - ovary
Nephrosplenic space

From: Le jeune and Whitcomb, VCNA, 2014
Finding the nephrosplenic space
Nephrosplenic space
Nephrosplenic space
Nephrosplenic space
Left side cranial
Left side caudal
Left side inguinal
Left side - bladder
Right side
Right side initial view
Right uterus & ovary
Small intestine-jejunum
Small intestine-ileum
Small intestine—duodenum
Medial cecal band
Right cranial - colon
Small colon
Terminal aorta
Common abnormal findings

- Impactions – any segment
- Taught transverse colonic bands
- Distended small intestine
- Vertical bands from the NS space
- Spleen displaced caudally
- Taught medial band of the cecum
- Right colonic bands
Summary

• The rectal examination is an essential skill for the equine veterinarian

• Rectal examination provides the veterinarian with information that is extremely valuable when evaluating a horse with colic

• Horse owners should be aware of the risks of performing a rectal examination and understand the type of information gained
Thank you

• Drs. Gillespie and Hermida
• Senior veterinary students