

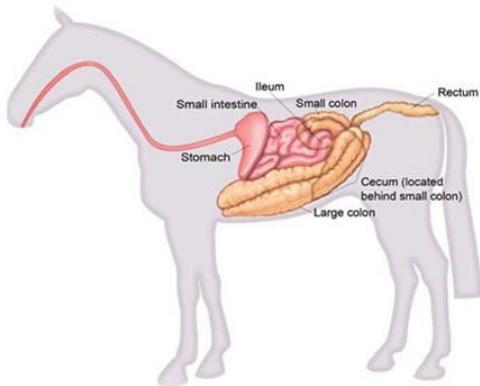
January Newsletter

Colitis (also known as inflammation of the large intestine) is a serious condition in horses and donkeys. Because the large intestine is responsible for absorbing water and maintaining normal gut function, inflammation can lead to rapid dehydration, electrolyte loss, and even life-threatening illness. Early recognition and prompt veterinary attention make a big difference.



What Is Colitis?

Colitis occurs when the lining of the large intestine becomes inflamed. This can happen for a variety of reasons:



- ↳ Sudden dietary changes
- ↳ Sand ingestion
- ↳ Infections (bacterial, viral, or parasitic)
- ↳ Toxins (including plant toxins)
- ↳ Reaction to certain medications

Common Signs to Watch For:

- Diarrhoea (from soft cow-pat consistency to watery)
- Reduced appetite
- Colic signs (pawing, rolling, flank watching)
- Lethargy or dullness
- Fever
- Dehydration (sunken eyes, tacky gums)
- Rapid heart rate

Donkeys often hide signs of illness ("stoic" behaviour), so subtle changes—quietness, decreased eating, or standing away from the herd — should not be ignored.



Contact us: 01297 304007

Email: Summerleaze@summerleaze-vets.co.uk

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Summerleaze equine vets

Client meeting – save the date

Equine colic

Discussing colic management in ambulatory and hospital practice

Wednesday 25th February 2026

7-7.30 chard equestrian, TA20 4BP RSVP



Colitis can progress quickly. Fluid losses from diarrhoea may result in:

- Severe dehydration
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Toxaemia (toxins entering the bloodstream)
- Laminitis, especially in ponies and donkeys

To diagnose the cause, we may carry out:

- Physical examination and check your horse's temperature
- Blood tests
- Faecal testing (parasites, bacterial culture, PCR tests)
- Ultrasound of the abdomen
- Sand sedimentation tests (if sand ingestion is suspected)

How You Can Help Prevent Colitis

- Introduce diet changes gradually (over 10–14 days).
- Provide clean, fresh water always.
- Reduce sand intake using rubber mats, hay feeders, or feeding off the ground.
- Maintain a regular worming programme based on faecal egg counts.
- Avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics and NSAIDs (such as phenylbutazone).
- Ensure good hygiene around feed buckets, paddocks, and stables.
- Monitor donkeys especially closely—they often hide pain or discomfort.

Treatment depends on the cause, but often includes:

- IV fluids to correct dehydration
- Electrolyte support
- Anti-inflammatories (used carefully)
- Pain relief
- Gastrointestinal protectants
- Probiotics
- Plasma transfusion (in severe toxæmia)
- Isolation if infectious disease is suspected- Some of these agents can be zoonotic- so people and other animals can get them as well! So, hygiene is key!

Call us immediately if:

- There is any diarrhoea, especially watery
- Your horse or donkey seems depressed, off food, or has a fever
- You suspect sand ingestion
- There are signs of colic
- A donkey becomes quiet or withdrawn

If you have concerns about your horse or donkey's gut health, or would like advice on prevention, please contact our team.

Email only Invoicing

We are continuing our aim as a business to reduce our carbon footprint and also to reduce business cost to ensure we can provide a service that is value for money.

We would like to switch to email only invoicing. If you would like to continue to receive paper invoices, please let us know, 01297 304007 or summerleaze@summerleaze-vets.co.uk, otherwise we will stop printing your invoice from the 1/4/2026