



When Your Horse Visits the UT Equine Hospital: 12 Tips

Taking your horse to the UT equine hospital can be confusing and emotionally taxing. As the owner, you will be asked to assist the treatment team, and also to make decisions for your horse.

- **Referral preferred but not required.** Emergency care from your vet can save a horse's life, so always call your vet first for fractures, colic, and deep lacerations. If you bring the horse without a referral from your vet, you must call ahead and provide all pertinent information.
- **Ask your veterinarian to call the hospital** and give the full history to the appropriate staff veterinarian.
- **Give and take.** When you call, be prepared to describe the horse's major problem, how long it has been sick or injured, the condition of the horse, any medications it is on, and any chronic problems. Ask for directions to the hospital, and where to unload the horse.
- **Notify your insurance company** as soon as possible, and always before surgery or euthanasia.
- **Have a plan.** If you don't have a trailer, make sure you have a plan in place to transport your horse in the event of an emergency. If the horse is boarded, make sure the barn manager knows what to do. He or she might not be able to reach you, and the care of a sick or injured horse often is a big commitment. Surgery for colic or a fracture repair often will cost \$5,000 or more; let your barn manager know your financial restrictions.
- **Call a friend.** If possible, bring your trainer, barn manager, or a horse-savvy friend to help you load and transport the horse, and sort through information and treatment options.
- **Stabilize the horse for transport.** Your vet should help with this, as a sick horse might require IV fluids; a horse with a fracture will need a properly-applied splint. Sedation might be helpful, but ask your vet or the vet at UT before giving any medications.
- **Bring your cell phone.** You might need to call for last-minute directions, or to get advice if the horse's condition deteriorates. If your arrival is delayed or if you decide not to bring the horse in, be sure to notify the hospital.
- **Find out who's who.** When you arrive you will be greeted by a large group of veterinarians (emergency clinicians, residents and interns), students, and technicians. Always mention any behavior that might be a danger to handlers (including kicking, biting, or violent reaction to procedures like injections). Find out who you will be communicating with during diagnosis and treatment. Then you should stand back and let the professionals care for your horse.
- **Be available.** Provide the appropriate person with all your contact numbers, and perhaps those of the person who accompanied you. If possible, stay through the initial work-up so you can make critical decisions. Give the name of your vet to contact for aftercare.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** Sometimes the treating vet thinks you understand, but you don't, as you may be in shock. If you think of questions when the vet isn't available, write them down.
- **Financial obligation:** Once the treatment team has finished, you will be given an estimate sheet on the cost of diagnosis and treatment for your horse. You will be asked to pay a deposit of 50% of the lowest estimate. Credit plans are available, so ask the client representative for information.
- **Visit during treatment and recovery.** Your horse will be continuously monitored throughout the night by the emergency service and transferred to either the medicine or surgery service in the morning. Please call 865-974-5701 after 10:00 AM the next morning to get an update on how your horse is doing. Visiting your horse is encouraged and visiting hours are from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday or at the discretion of vet looking after your horse. Ask if you can give treats or take your horse for a walk.

We think it's important to think about an emergency before it occurs, when you are not upset. We want you to know what to expect when your horse comes to UT; make a plan and writing it down so that you will be prepared.

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