



## **Emergency Conditions in Horses: Opinions and Decision Making of Livery Yard Owners**

Adelle Bowden, John Burford, Marnie Brennan, Gary England and Sarah Freeman

This is the audio summary for the paper titled 'Emergency Conditions in Horses Opinions and Decision Making of Livery Yard Owners'. The study was the first in a series of investigations that looked at the common emergency problems in the horse, developing new data to help inform horse owners and vets.

The study design was an online survey of livery yard owners who were registered with the British Horse Society and it asks them about the common problems they see in the horses, in their care, including the emergency problems, the conditions that concern them the most, the factors that influenced their decision making in emergency cases and their experiences. The study was targeted to livery yard owners, as they have responsibility for large groups of horses, often with multiple owners. So they usually have a wide range of experiences, and they may also be the main contact or source of information for several owners.

The survey used both open and closed questions as this was a new area of research. So open questions for participants opinions were essential the survey, had four sections. The first section asked about their opinions of common veterinary conditions, common critical, or life-threatening conditions, the conditions that they were most concerned about and asked them to rank factors that may affect decision-making. The second section asks participants about their experience of different emergency conditions in the horse, their confidence in their decision to call a veterinary surgeon in an emergency and their experiences of decision-making in these situations. The third section gathered information on participants demographic while the final section asked about advice-seeking behaviour. 450 livery yard owners were contacted and 133 participated in the survey. 89% of the participants were female and most were aged between 35 to 54 years of age, 97% had kept horses for more than 10 years and most had more than 20 horses in their care. responses to open questions were categorized and then ranked to identify the most frequent responses. Livery yard owners reported that the most common conditions that horses required veterinary care for were colic, lameness, and wounds. The most commonly listed critical conditions were colic wounds and fractures, and the conditions that livery yard owners considered to be the most concerning were colic, lameness, and wounds. The factors that were most likely to influence their decision on choosing treatment or euthanasia for a critically ill horse included the amount of pain and suffering the horse was experiencing the likelihood that the condition would resolve with treatment, how sick the horse was, the financial cost of treatment and the age of the horse. In terms of their experience, 99% had experience of emergency conditions and the most common reasons for these were colic wounds, laminitis, choke, and foot abscesses.

Most believed that a vet had been called soon enough for emergencies, but where there were delays, these were attributed to yard owner factors, including waiting to observe a horse, not realizing the extent of an injury and inability to contact the individual horse owners, and not having permission to act on their behalf. And also factors related to the veterinary surgeon, including attendance at other emergencies at the time of the call or a large distance to travel. When asked where they sought advice on their horses' health, the most common sources were veterinary surgeons, farriers and physiotherapists. This study highlights the types of conditions that yard owners commonly deal with and the factors that affect their decision-making. It highlighted the importance of colic and wounds as emergency conditions in the horse and was one of the early studies forming the direction for the react colic campaign and the wound project, developing new research and resources for horse owners and vets on these key areas of equine health and welfare. The limitations of the study were that it was a small sample size and the responses were based on opinions and participant recall, this research has been continued with a larger scale study and case series to collect clinical data, to support opinions on the frequency and outcome of different conditions, which have supported the findings of this study.

This study clearly identified the importance of colic delivery yard owners, both in terms of frequency and impact and it was identified as both the most common emergency and non-routine condition. And as the disease, that was the most concerning for participants, there were a number of factors involved in emergency decision-making, including the severity of the disease, the prognosis, financial considerations, and individual horse factors, including age use of the animal and any concurrent conditions. Factors that may cause delays in the horse, receiving treatment included delays in recognizing the condition or calling the vet or obtaining owner consent. The outcomes of this study have informed key aspects of the React Colic campaign, including the focus on recognizing early signs of colic, calling the vet immediately and ensuring all information and consent is available and shared. Work is currently underway to generate new data on wounds in the horse and develop similar educational materials for this important condition.

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