

RECTAL PALPATION ~ Understanding and accepting the risks

Rectal palpation is an important and commonly performed procedure in equine veterinary practice. It can be used to gain information concerning the reproductive stage, status and health of the mare and also in the diagnosis of colic. Although rare, all rectal palpations carry the risk of a 'rectal tear'.

Rectal Tears – The risks

This involves damage to one or more tissue layers of the rectal wall, up to and including the full thickness of all tissue layers. Depending on the extent of the tear, antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and possibly IV fluids may be required. Unfortunately, a full thickness tear carries a grave prognosis and may lead to death, in spite of intensive medical and surgical treatment.

Occasionally and in spite of all precautions, horses can suffer a rectal tear while undergoing rectal palpation.

Risk Prevention

Equibreed veterinarians will consult with you if they feel that your horse is at increased risk. To help prevent any rectal tears, stocks are used where possible, sedation may be required and muscle relaxants can be given if felt necessary. At Equibreed, we are aware of the risks and potential consequences of rectal palpation and act to minimise these risks as far as possible.

What Actually Happens?

In some cases the veterinarian may feel the tear take place during the palpation or may see evidence of blood on the glove at the completion of the procedure. In the event that the veterinarian is aware, immediate steps will be taken to diagnose the extent of the tear and begin treatment of the horse.

Occasionally a tear may occur without the veterinarian being aware. It may take some time before the horse shows clinical signs and this might include colic, depression and fever.

Something isn't right?

If at any time you suspect a rectal tear, or that your horse is unwell following examination, call a veterinarian immediately.

By engaging our services you agree to our general terms and conditions and therefore understand and accept the above risks associated with.