

## EQUINE PRACTICE

# Administration of fluids per rectum in horses

AFTER a successful outcome in treating a case of suspected botulism in a horse, I was encouraged to write to *Veterinary Record* by the owner/yard manager about the ease of long-term rehydration by the frequent administration of fluids per rectum, especially in non-hospitalised cases, after they noted the paucity of references in the literature to rectal fluids in the treatment of botulism and grass sickness.

In many cases, such as impaction colic, constipation, grass sickness and now botulism, I have used, and left with the owner, a standard calf stomach tube with a two litre bag attached to introduce warmed tap water into the rectum.

The technique has some advantages over other methods of fluid administration in the field (Quizlet 2012) including quick, easy delivery through gravity, lack of expense, no requirement for specialist equipment, the sterility of fluids not being an issue, the giving of large quantities over time as fluids are rapidly absorbed, lack of complications with intravenous catheters, no need for specialist monitoring, and easier and fewer complications than repeat/in situ stomach tubing. It can also be left with the owner.

If faeces are present in the rectum, then the fluids can act as an enema, and further fluids are administered after a few minutes, and are usually retained. Each horse will have an individual maximum amount that can be administered at one time, but two litres are usually well tolerated in a 500 kg horse. The lubricated smooth blunt-ended tube is advanced approximately 10 cm into the rectum to avoid possible damage or resistance and is well tolerated.

The successful administration of fluids per rectum to a human in a wilderness environment, with reference to their use in geriatric medicine, has been described by Grocott and others (2005). Electrolyte solutions were used, which may also have added benefits in horses with electrolyte imbalances, and could be investigated further.

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## References

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### References

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