Telephone triage and advice to owners of horses with colic

**Step 1: Owner details**
- Confirm the caller’s details:
  - Is it the owner of the horse on the phone or a friend / yard manager etc?
  - What is the best contact number?
  - Where is the horse being kept?

**Step 2a: Is it colic?**
- Is the horse showing any of the following signs:
  - Horse appears restless or agitated.
  - The horse’s appetite or droppings have changed.
  - The horse is showing signs of abdominal pain.
  - The horse is displaying clinical changes.
  - The horse appears tired or lethargic.

**Step 2b: Could it be critical?**
- Is the horse showing any of the following signs:
  - Severe and continuous pain.
  - Abrasions over the eyes and / or pelvis.
  - Dull, depressed and non-responsive.
  - Unexplained sweating and rapid breathing.

**Step 2c: How long?**
- Establish how long the horse has been unwell for:
  - When was the horse last seen to be acting normal?
  - When were the signs of colic first noticed?
  - Are the signs getting worse?

**Step 3: Inform a vet**
- As much information as possible should be relayed to the attending veterinary surgeon.
- Potentially critical cases need prioritising for urgent veterinary attention.

**Step 4a: Call the owner back**
- Reassure the owner that a vet is on their way.

**Step 4b: Previous history of colic?**
- If not already approached during the initial call:
  - Confirm if the horse has suffered from previous episodes of colic.
  - Have there been any recent changes in management or routine.

**Step 4c: What should the owner do?**
- Ensure the horse is in a safe environment.
- Rolling should not be prevented.
- Do not put themselves at risk of injury (PPE).
- Do not force horse to exercise.
- Decisions – insurance, transport, referral?
- Contact the practice if they become concerned before the vet’s arrival.

**Step 5: Update the vet**
- Relay any additional information to the attending veterinary surgeon.
### Emergency Contact Numbers

#### Equine Transport Companies

Please use this space to record the contact details of reputable equine transport companies that are known to the practice. Details of these services should be offered to owners who do not have access to their own equine transportation in the event of an emergency.

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#### Equine Referral Hospitals

Please use this space to record the contact details of equine referral hospitals frequently used by the practice. Details of specific hospitals should be offered to owners, on direct advice of the referring veterinary surgeon, in the event that their horse requires referral to a specialist equine hospital.

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