

# What to expect

## EQUINE COLITIS



52 Campus Drive, Saskatoon SK S7N 5B4

**Small Animal Clinic** | **Large Animal Clinic**  
306-966-7126 | 306-966-7178

### About the VMC

Welcome to the WCV Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC), the veterinary referral centre for all of Western Canada and the teaching hospital for future veterinarians and veterinary specialists.

Our clinical team includes board-certified veterinary specialists, clinical associates and registered veterinary technologists, as well as veterinary specialists in training (residents), clinical interns and senior veterinary students. We look forward to caring for your animal and meeting you in person.

### Before Your Visit

To prepare for your visit to the VMC, please visit us online:

[vmc.usask.ca/about/new-client.php](http://vmc.usask.ca/about/new-client.php)

You will find more information about finding our location, parking, hours of operation and the Large Animal Clinic reception area.

### What to Expect

While the WCV Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC) shares many similarities to other veterinary hospitals, there are some differences that may have an impact on your appointment.

- The VMC is a teaching hospital for WCV veterinary students and for students enrolled in the veterinary technology program at the Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Please note that teaching takes additional time. Students participate in all aspects of examining and treating our patients under the immediate supervision of licensed veterinarians and board-certified veterinary specialists. While teaching is essential to our facility, the well-being of our patients is the highest priority for VMC clinical teams.
- Given the complexity of referral cases, we often need to order additional diagnostic testing or consult with others about diagnoses and treatment plans for patients. If you are travelling from out of town, please be prepared to stay two days in Saskatoon with your animal. In some cases, your stay may need to be longer. During your appointment, we will give you an estimate of the length of time it may take for additional tests and consultation.

### General Steps

Acute diarrhea in horses is a life-threatening condition. Since many causes of colitis are contagious, your horse will be admitted to the equine isolation facility so we can protect other hospital patients.

Colitis is often made worse by serious, life-threatening complications. Early and intensive therapy is critical as clinicians attempt to save the patient's life.

Management typically includes the following:

- A senior veterinary student or a large animal internal medicine house officer (clinical interns or residents who are licensed veterinarians) will meet you at the Large Animal Clinic reception. A veterinary technologist will help you unload your horse into the isolation stall.



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[www.usask.ca/wcvm](http://www.usask.ca/wcvm)

## Payment

If your animal is not hospitalized, the WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre requires full payment at the time of service.

If your animal is hospitalized, half of the estimated cost is due prior to services being provided. Final payment is due at the time of discharge.

Occasionally, the hospital will mail statements to you after discharge for additional tests that were approved by you and for charges not included on the initial invoice at discharge.

The WCVM Veterinary Medical Centre accepts the following payment methods:

- cash
- credit card (Visa and MasterCard)
- debit card (Interac)

**Personal cheques are not accepted.**

If you have questions about payment, call the administration office at 306-966-7103, or visit [vmc.usask.ca/about/payment.php](http://vmc.usask.ca/about/payment.php)

## For more information

**Large Animal Clinic**  
306-966-7178  
[vmccorrespond@usask.ca](mailto:vmccorrespond@usask.ca)

## General Steps, continued . . .

- A senior veterinary student and a house officer will take a complete medical history and then conduct a physical examination of your horse with the assistance of a veterinary technologist.
- Attempting to determine the cause of colitis is very important for management, protection of other horses, and for prevention. To best manage your horse, we will perform the following diagnostic tests:
  - **Blood work:** regular (daily or every other day) assessment to monitor your horse's progress and to adjust its treatment plan. We may run specific blood tests to help us identify the cause of colitis.
  - **Fecal testing:** Many colitis-causing pathogens may be identified on testing of feces. Some important pathogens include parasites, *Salmonella* spp., Potomac horse fever and *Clostridia* spp. Appropriate testing includes the submission of at least three fecal samples for bacterial culture and molecular testing.

Please note that despite diagnostic testing, we may not be able to make a definitive diagnosis in all cases.

- Treatment of colitis must be intensive to increase the horse's chance of survival. Treatment usually includes:
  - Intravenous fluid therapy is an indispensable part of treating colitis. Horses with diarrhea become dehydrated very quickly. They also lose proteins through the diarrhea, and as a result, it's frequently needed to administer plasma.
  - Antibiotic treatment will be necessary for some cases. Your horse's clinician will determine the risks versus the benefits in each case.
  - Anti-inflammatory drugs: colitis is a painful condition and horses are often febrile (fevered) and depressed with little or no appetite. We usually give anti-inflammatory drugs to support the horse during the most acute phases of the condition.
  - To decrease the absorption of potential toxins from the gut, we may give your horse adsorbent drugs.
  - We often implement anti-endotoxin therapy early on in your horse's treatment. Endotoxemia is a common and often fatal complication arising from colitis.
  - Continuous icing (cryotherapy) of the feet: laminitis is a common and serious complication arising from colitis. Continuous icing of the feet may aid in its prevention.

### General Steps, continued . . .

Horses with acute diarrhea usually require multiple days of intensive treatment at the hospital. The course of disease is difficult to predict and the horse's response to treatment is an important determinant of prognosis.

We will let you know when your horse is ready to be discharged. Full bill payment is required before discharge.

Discharge recommendations will be discussed with you. We will either print out those recommendations at the time of discharge or email them to you by the next day.