



BARROW VETERINARY SERVICES, PC

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**BVS Upcoming Events:**

4/17 Tractor Supply Equine Day @ Covington location. Q&A session with Dr. Thomas, vaccines available. Call for more info.

# BVS Hoof Beats

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## The Grass is Here!

Horses are meant to live on grass, right? So good grass = good nutrition for my horse, right? Not always.

Humankind has altered the diet of the horse by keeping him stalled and not allowing continuous movement and grazing. We have changed to dried grass hays, 8-12 hour turnout on small pastures, and concentrate (grain) fed about every 12 hours. In doing this, we have created horses that are what we call insulin resistant. They cannot handle large amounts of “sugars” and allowing access to high sugars can cause laminitis.

The terms laminitis and founder are often used interchangeably, but laminitis is more about short term effects, while founder is more of a long-term problem. Laminitis occurs when inflammation in the blood flow to the foot causes the hoof wall to separate from the small tissues that help hold the coffin bone in place. The end result that can be life-

ending is when the coffin bone rotates downward and comes through the bottom of the sole. Prevention, however, is easy. (See our website for more information on this condition)

As the grass begins to grow this spring, it’s important to remember a few key points for your laminitic/founder-prone horse

1. Start pasture turnout slowly. One hour daily for a few days increasing by an hour every three to five days.
2. Grazing muzzles can be your best friend – they allow your horse to be turned out and get the exercise he or she needs to stay fit and not become bored in a stall, and allows small amounts of grazing and normal drinking. Check [bestfriendequine.com](http://bestfriendequine.com).

3. The “bad” carbohydrates in grasses are lowest in the morning, highest in the afternoon, and decrease again overnight. If you’re not willing to muzzle your horse, try to decrease the amount of bad carbohydrates in your horse’s diet —turnout should be in the morning hours with turn in around noon.

To tailor a diet for your horse, set-up an appointment with Dr. Barrow or Dr. Thomas. Nutritional consults are **on special this month for \$25 (normal price=\$40)**, in addition to your equine examination cost of \$35. A consult includes weight and body condition score evaluation, feed assessment, and nutritional recommendations.



# The Prepurchase Examination

You have just found the horse of your dreams, next show horse or pasture pet. Do you write the check, load them on the trailer and be on your way home or is there something else to consider? How about a prepurchase exam? No matter the cost or long term goal for your possible new addition, we believe that a prepurchase exam is an essential next step.

Horses, as many of you know, are a long term, sometimes expensive investment. Prepurchase exams are designed to give you, the purchaser, as much good and useful information about a horse's current health and soundness, as well as long term concerns and factors that may alter a horse's ability to perform its job. Our standard prepurchase exam includes both a thorough physical and lameness exam. We also encourage everything from radiographs, to blood work, to reproductive exams, to endoscopy and ultrasound – depending on the horse's future job and expectations.

It is important to remember with a prepurchase exam that the information gathered is much like an investigation.

The information is pertinent to that moment in time and may only be a part of the picture. Because of this, it is rare that a veterinarian will pass/fail a horse on a prepurchase exam. It is much more likely that the veterinarian will present all information collected and discuss with you the possible short term and long term consequences of the findings. Based on this you, as the purchaser, must decide whether it is a reasonable investment or not, or use the information to possibly negotiate a better price based on risk.

**It is always preferred to have a veterinarian involved that has no previous history with the animal being examined to protect all parties involved.**

When performing the prepurchase exam the veterinarian works for the purchaser; this is the reason that many

veterinarians steer clear of performing these exams on horses that they have examined or worked on in the past. Veterinarians, just like physicians, are bound by patient/client/doctor confidentiality and cannot disclose any information that is contained in a patient's previous medical history.

While prepurchase exams are not always perfect or foolproof, they certainly provide a prospectus into the significant financial responsibility for you, the investor, and can certainly save both time and money in the hunt for your "Next World Champion."



A flexion test can be a useful diagnostic tool to help the veterinarian focus on areas that might need further investigation with radiographs prior to purchase.

## Vitals

So you know how old your horse is, what breed he is, and how tall he is. Other important horse information includes: normal temperature, respirations, gut sounds, and membrane color. Do you know what those should be? Use our quick-reference chart below. Please note that these values are for the adult horse at rest and per minute values can easily be taken over 15 seconds and then multiplied by four.

### Temperature - 99-101°F

Use a normal digital thermometer rectally (you can buy at any store) – just keep it in the barn so you're not tempted to use it on yourself in a pinch!

### Pulse - 30 to 40 beats per minute at rest (much slower than you and me!)

Take this by feeling for the artery that runs under the jawbone, or using a stethoscope listen on the left side under the elbow. "Lub-dub"=one beat

### Respirations - 10 to 30 breaths per minute

Watch your horse's belly or feel the ribcage. Count one in and one out as one breath. The respirations should NEVER be more than the pulse.

### Gut sounds - Absence of sound can be a problem

Divide each side of the horse's abdomen behind the ribcage into a upper and lower section and listen at each section by holding your ear against the skin if the horse allows it. You can also use a stethoscope. No sounds in one minute when listening with a stethoscope can signal a problem.

### Capillary Refill Time - Less than 2 seconds

Lift your horse's upper lip and press your finger on the gum to blanch it. Count the number of seconds it takes to become pink again. A slow (more than 2 seconds) capillary refill time can indicate shock.

### Mucous Membrane Color/Texture - Pale Pink to Pink/Moist

Note this while checking capillary refill time. An off color - yellow, blue, bright red or very pale can indicate a systemic problem.



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**Where horses aren't just our job,  
they're our passion.**