

Equine Behavior Problems

Thank you for Katherine Houpt's excellent introduction to equine behavior problems (*Int J Stud Anim Prob* 2 (6):329-337, 1981). I would like to add two observations to her commentary on cribbing and pawing.

Cribbing is also an indication of the amount of pain endured. Veterinary surgeon G.J. Baker, MRCVS, noted this in his report in *Equine Behavior*, Spring 1979: "Horses progress from door chewing to true cribbing...as a result of pain." A month prior to his death, my 28-year-old gelding began chewing wood in his box stall, as well as showing deterioration in general condition. He later succumbed to arterial mesentery thrombosis and spontaneous twist of the ileocecolic junction. A summary of the case, and the horse's behavior near the time of death, is described in *Equine Behavior*, Summer 1981.

Throughout the 11 years I cared for him, the same gelding had a habit of alternately circling in midair and sometimes pawing, using alternate forelegs, while eating grain and occasionally, hay. This behavior seemed to be similar to that seen in nursing kittens — a rhythmic extension and retraction of the claws, or in human babies who drum with a spoon while being fed.

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