

## Foreword

As an equine surgeon, the most common questions I receive following colic surgery on a client's horse are: "What caused my horse's colic?" and "What could I have done to prevent it?" The answer to the first question generally is "I don't know." The answer to the second question is much more difficult, and frequently couched in terms that take into account the tremendous guilt a horse owner feels when their horse has severe colic.

It is true that a number of serious colic episodes are intestinal accidents (similar to a car accident—an 'Act of God'), and there is very little that can be done to prevent an accident. It is also true that only about 5% of colic episodes require surgical intervention. Nevertheless, there is a great deal that can and should be done to reduce the overall occurrence of colic in horses. I am now very happy to report that much of the information I have tried to convey to clients in the middle of the night can now be found in one concise source: Dr. Christine King's *Preventing Colic in Horses*.

The real answer to "What caused my horse's colic?" is mankind's management of the horse. To understand this point, you have to realize that horses have evolved on the American plains as animals that continuously move and graze for most of the day. Knowing this, why would we put a horse in a stall and feed it grain? Because we have adapted the horse's environment to suit our purposes. In fact, some horses are so highly bred for their intended purpose that they cannot live as their ancestors did because of their need for high-energy feed and shelter. But by being aware of what a horse was originally intended to do, we can attempt to simulate its natural feeding and environment as much as possible. This is the major theme of Dr. King's book.

However, the reasons that management and feeding practices trigger colic are complex. As you read this book you will begin to understand why colic develops, and you will begin to develop your own answers as to how to prevent colic in your horses. All of this information was previously available in the veterinary literature, but it has been buried in a great many scientific publications not readily understood by the horse-owning public. Dr. King has done a remarkable job of condensing this information in the context of common sense and practicality. I urge you to read and use this information so that I don't have to talk to you about preventing colic while waiting for your horse to recover from colic surgery.

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