

## **Saving a Horse Cast in a Stall**

Our topics for this week are:

- **How horses become cast in stalls**
- **Safest method to help a horse cast in a stall**
- **Monitoring a horse recovering from being cast**

Horses roll on a frequent basis to scratch their back and belly and dust bathe. When a horse rises, it must straighten its front legs in front of it and then push its body up with its hip muscles. If they cannot straighten their front legs, they cannot rise onto their feet.

Some horses, particularly younger ones, will sometimes attempt to roll in their stall. When they do, there is a risk of being cast in a stall, i.e., rolling 3/4 of the way to fully over next to a wall and becoming entrapped with their legs folded against a wall. When cast, a horse cannot push themselves back over or away from the wall, and they will panic, thrashing with their legs and head. Remaining in this position can cause permanent injuries or be deadly for the horse.

### **Initial Response:**

To rescue a horse that is cast in a stall, the handler should call for assistance while also appearing calm to the horse. The handler should talk to the horse to be sure the horse knows of the handler's presence, and speak to it in a calm manner so as not to cause it fear or excitement. As soon as an assistant is present, the handler should position himself near the lower part of the horse's neck while not getting near the horse's legs or trying to step or reach over the horse.

### **Moving it from the Wall:**

The safest method of moving the horse is to place a rope or leather strap, non-constricting, loop around its neck, work the loop toward the upper part of the horse's neck, and then pull the neck away from the wall and toward the middle of the stall until the horse can get its front legs stretched out. In the absence of a rope or leather strap, the mane in the mid-neck area can be pulled in an attempt to move the horse. Pulling the horse by a halter and lead rope to reposition a cast horse could injure its neck and must be avoided. Care must be taken by the handler not to get stepped on or pinned against the wall by the horse as it attempts to stand.

An alternative method involves putting long lines or ropes on the horse's legs to pull the horse toward the handler. This method is not recommended. It endangers the handler to put ropes on their legs and then pull the struggling legs toward the handler, placing the horse in the middle of the stall trying to rise. It also endangers the horse due to the risk of becoming entangled in the ropes when trying to rise.

The tail of a cast horse should not be pulled to try to help it rise. Moving just the hindquarters is difficult, dangerous, and does not position the horse to rise. It may also cause permanent injuries to the tail's nerves, muscles, tendons, or bones.

**Monitor for Complications Afterwards:**

The horse should be observed for an hour after standing for signs of colic, one cause for attempting to roll in a stall and a possible result of being cast in a stall. It should also be monitored for swellings in the legs or lameness from injuries that may have occurred.

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at [CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com](mailto:CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com)

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- 1. A horse cast in a stall is an emergency situation.**
- 2. The first action in response to finding a horse cast in a stall is to call for help.**
- 3. A cast horse should be pulled toward the center of the stall with a non-constricting loop around its neck.**

More information on animal handling can be found in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: [www.betteranimalhandling.com](http://www.betteranimalhandling.com) . This website has more than 200 past podcasts with notes on handling of dogs, cats, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, horses, cattle, small ruminants, swine, and poultry.

Don't forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.