

The American Association of Equine Practitioners guidelines help horse owners grasp the options.

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Whether a horse is purchased for personal or business reasons, ownership represents a significant investment of time, money and resources. While no one likes to think about the potential for tragedy, horses seem to be prone to illness, accidents and injury. Should some peril befall your horse, nothing may ease the emotional burden, but wise planning can help reduce the economic impacts.



Many reputable insurance companies offer policies to help protect owners from financial loss should a horse become ill, incapacitated or die. Because individual policies vary widely from company to company and circumstance to circumstance, it is beyond the scope of this article to explain how to find the right coverage to meet your needs.

Each policy has its own terms, conditions and requirements, which may necessitate action from you, your veterinarian and your insurance company.

Types of Coverage

There are many types of coverage available to the horse owner and the conditions can vary widely between companies. Common types of coverage available for horses include but are not limited to:

- Mortality – paid if the horse dies
- Loss of Use – paid on a percentage basis if horse is permanently incapacitated for its intended use or purpose

- Major Medical – like health insurance, offsets costs of veterinary care
- Surgical – policies which cover specific procedures such as colic surgery
- Breeding Infertility – covers stallions or mares for reproductive failure
- Specified Perils – includes any number of things such as lightning, fire or transportation

Know Your Policy

Insurance policies are legal contracts between the underwriter (the company) and the insured (horse owner). To better safeguard yourself and your horse:

- Define your needs.
- Make a list of questions to ask your insurance agent or company.
- Read the contract thoroughly before you apply for coverage.
- Ask the insurance representative to explain any words, phrases or provisions you do not understand completely.
 - Know your responsibilities. What is required should your horse become ill, injured or die?
 - Understand any specific guidelines for emergency situations. A crisis is not the time to be trying to interpret your policy's fine print or to look for contact phone numbers.
 - Discuss the renewal process with your insurance representative and understand what effect claims have on renewal, possible exclusions that result and how long these exclusions remain in place. Common claims may include colic (medical versus surgical), lameness, gastric ulcers, and other medical conditions.
 - If euthanasia is recommended, know what steps must be taken in order for a claim to be valid.
 - Comparison shop. Cost should not be the sole consideration, as buyers should consider the longevity and reputation of the agency and the insurance carrier, as well as their experience with horse insurance.



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