What to expect

The University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine’s Equine Clinical Services offer a unique combination of routine primary care and high end referral services. You can be assured that, regardless of the reason for your visit, your horse will receive the best possible care. However, the reason for your visit may affect what you will see and do while at the Veterinary Medical Center after your initial admission. If you are bringing your horse for routine health care (vaccinations, annual examination, pregnancy evaluation, etc.), your visit will look very much like a visit from your regular veterinarian. However, if you are bringing your horse in for a more complex problem, for a scheduled surgery, or for an emergency procedure, your visit may be very different. We offer the following information to help you understand what to expect on your visit to the Piper Equine Hospital. If you would like further information, we encourage you to call and ask our office staff (612-625- 6700). They are always happy to help you.

Preadmission
If you are interested in setting up an appointment, please call us or refer to the Contact Us page for contact information. You do not need to be referred by a veterinarian although we encourage this as well. You are welcome to call in advance to provide initial information about your horse. If you are being referred by a veterinarian, we often like to hear from your veterinarian before your visit so that we can discuss their findings. It is helpful for you or your vet to compile the medical information about your animal prior to your visit. The more information that you can provide the more efficient we can be during your visit. If you find that you need to change your scheduled visit time or if you are going to be late, please call to ensure that we will be able to accommodate a new appointment time.

Initial Admission
Please see the Directions and Parking page to get more detailed information on how to get here. Most horses will be seen at the Piper Clinic portion of the Equine Center. A few will be seen at the Large Animal Hospital.

Please leave your horse in your trailer and check in at the desk prior to unloading. Be sure to let the receptionist know if your horse needs to be unloaded immediately and the team will help you unload and then complete the admission process.

Piper Clinic parking/ unloading
Please pull into the covered unloading area directly in front of the west side of the building. There are safety gates both front and back to prevent loose horses. If another trailer is in that area, you can park in the trailer parking area in front of the building. There is also a ramp to assist with loading horses just north of the covered unloading. Use the glass doors to enter the office.
Large Animal Hospital parking/unloading
Trailer parking is parallel to the building on the north side of the parking lot. Please try to avoid blocking any garage doors. Proceed to the office to check in. The office is located on the northeast side of the parking lot near a walkover between two buildings.

When you check in at the Admissions Office, we will notify the clinicians that you are here, call for a technician or handler to help you unload, and complete any necessary paperwork. The office staff will review hospital policies for payment and visits at this time. If you sent your horse with a hauler, they will be asked for owner information and history. If you are using a hauler please be sure that you have provided the necessary information to the admissions office prior to admission. We can prearrange drop off times if you would prefer to bring your horse the night before or earlier in the day; and of course we are available for emergency admissions at any time of day or night. If you are bringing an animal for emergency evaluation please be sure to call beforehand to let the staff know and prepare for your arrival.

Your Medical Team
You will be met by one or more of you care team. The team includes a senior faculty member (dark blue shirts), one or two house officers (graduate veterinarians in advanced residency or internship programs also in dark blue shirts), a veterinary student (maroon top), and a certified veterinary technician (black shirts). The first team members that you meet will help you unload your horse and take you to a stall or in the exam area where they will collect additional information about your horse.

General Case Evaluation
The specific diagnostic steps that will be taken with your horse will vary depending on the problem being evaluated. After an initial physical examination, we will develop a plan and discuss the expected steps with you. Some problems are straightforward and diagnosis can be made quickly. In general, however, you can expect that evaluation process to be more thorough and to take longer than would be practical with your referring veterinarian. This reflects the nature of the cases that we most commonly see (referrals, complex problems, and problems that have already proven difficult to diagnose), the availability of a number of diagnostic tools that are not accessible in practice, and facilities that allow us to combine a range of diagnostic procedures concurrently. You are welcome to stay throughout the evaluation process. However, if we anticipate a long process, you may choose to head home for chores or to spend a little time at one of the many local attractions. Once we have established a working diagnosis, we will discuss treatment options with you. Most problems have several treatment options and we will explain each with a prognosis for successful resolution of the problem. We want you to feel part of your horse’s medical team and hope that you will ask as many questions as you need so that you fully understand your options.

Lameness Evaluation
If you are bringing your horse to the Veterinary Medical Center for evaluation of a lameness problem, be prepared for a thorough, systematic examination. Please see our Lameness Exams
link for details on the components of our lameness exams. While some sources of lameness can be identified quickly (1-2 hours), this is typically not the case for horses with subtle, intermittent or multiple limb lamenesses. This is particularly likely when your horse has already received a basic examination by your veterinarian. The goal of the thorough examination is to identify the optimum treatment plan and avoid unnecessary tests. Most cases take 4-6 hours, and complex cases may occasionally take several days to complete the evaluation.

**Elective Surgery**
If your horse is scheduled for an elective surgical procedure, we usually ask that you bring your horse in the day before surgery so that we can perform a pre-anesthetic examination to identify any health concerns that might alter anesthetic or surgical plans, and to minimize stress on the horse.

If your horse has been accepted for same-day surgery (reserved for short procedures in healthy horses), you will need to drop your horse off by 8am on the morning of surgery. We will provide a tentative surgery time. If the time needs to change in order to address specific concerns for your horse or to accommodate unscheduled emergency procedures, we will notify you directly. You may be able to view certain surgeries through a live feed into the client waiting room. For safety and facility design reasons, we cannot allow direct observation of surgery, but you are welcome to wait in one of our waiting areas during the surgery. Once your horse is recovered and can be returned to its stall, we will notify you again and you may visit your horse. Horses admitted for same-day surgeries may be discharged in the afternoon of the surgery once they are stable enough to travel. For more involved surgery or for horses with additional health concerns, discharge will be based on the problem and condition of the horse.

**Emergency Admissions**
Our first goal of admission for emergencies is to stabilize your horse. Based on the information that you and your veterinarian have provided to us before your arrival, we will have an admitting team ready and they will move your horse quickly to an appropriate examination area. One member will gather additional information from you and explain what we are doing, while other members proceed with evaluation and stabilization of your horse. If your horse is suffering from significant blood loss (major lacerations or traumatic injuries), airway obstruction, or pain (colic, fractures), there is a risk of unpredictable behavior and the team may need to clear the working area for safety reasons until the situation can be controlled.

Evaluation and stabilization will continue until we have enough information to determine a tentative diagnosis and a treatment plan. One of the clinicians will discuss the possible diagnoses, treatment options, costs and prognoses with you. Once you have decided on the course you would like to take, we will proceed forward. If your horse is insured, you will need to be prepared to contact them before treatment begins, if you have not already done so. If your horse requires emergency surgery, and you give your permission, we will proceed as soon as all necessary parties (senior surgeon, anesthesiologist, and surgical technician) are in place. Some horses need time to be stabilized with fluids and medications prior to anesthesia.
Anesthetic induction, surgery and recovery require the full attention of our staff and we do not allow owners in the surgery area for safety reasons. However, we will need to be able to contact you throughout the surgical procedure to keep you updated on progress and to discuss options based on findings. You may either wait in our waiting area or remain in touch by cell phone.

**Hospitalization and Communication**

If your horse is hospitalized for continued evaluation or treatment, you can expect regular updates on progress. We will typically contact you daily at a time that works for you as long as your horse is progressing along the expected course. Your care team will arrange contact times before you leave your horse or during their first call. In addition, we will contact you outside of arranged times if there is a change in status (for better or worse), or if we need to discuss a change in the treatment plan. You are welcome to visit your horse during its stay in the hospital. Please see our visiting policy for details.

You are welcome to call to check on progress during the day by calling 612-625-6700 if you missed our call. Please keep in mind that our clinicians may not be able to answer immediately if they are taking care of other cases. If we cannot answer when you call, please be sure to leave times and numbers when we can reach you and we will call back as soon as we can. We will also update your referring veterinarian (if you were referred) soon after you arrive, during hospitalisation and before your horse leaves. If you have another veterinarian that you would like us to update, please let the office staff know during admission or indicate this on your pre-admission form. As a part of our professional-client relationship, it is our policy that we will not release information about your horse to anyone other than the owner or agent without explicit permission from the owner. If there are others with whom we should communicate (trainers, co-owners, riders, etc.), please let us know. Otherwise we will call and ask your permission before we release any information.

**Discharge**

We want to be sure that you leave with all of the information that you need to continue care of your horse with your veterinarian. Our technicians are available to discharge your horse after regular hours, but we would generally prefer to arrange discharge at a time when one or more of the clinicians who have provided care for your horse can meet with you to discuss your case and go over discharge information.

We will provide a discharge letter for you at the time of discharge that describes our findings, diagnostic procedures, treatments, prognosis and aftercare recommendations. For day cases we will often provide an abbreviated letter that provides the information necessary for short-term aftercare to let you get on the road while we compile additional information. A full discharge letter will follow by email or mail. The discharge letter will also be sent to your referring veterinarian and, if you like, to other veterinarians who have or will be providing care for your horse. We encourage you to call us at any time after discharge if you have questions about your
visit or about your horse’s progress. We routinely call to follow up our cases from after discharge.

More questions? Please see our FAQ pages (general questions, information regarding hospitalized patients, and our visiting policy)