

EMERGENCY: Cast Horse

What's your plan when you find your horse stuck in his stall or paddock?

By SARA JACKSON

It's every horse owner's worst nightmare—finding your horse wedged up against the wall or fence, unable to roll over or stand up. But “casting” is more common than you might think.

The best thing you can do in this situation is to remain calm and remember to keep yourself safe from the thrashing hooves. If at all possible, you'll want to call for backup, because moving a 1,200-pound animal is an especially difficult one-man job.

Approach the horse calmly and speak softly, so as not to startle him any further, and assess the situation. Are there any obvious signs of injury to his legs? If the horse is lying still, check to see if he's breathing. Cast horses will either panic or, if they're too scared, will lie completely still.

There are two tried-and-true methods for helping a horse become unstuck:

➤ **With Two Or More People**

Grab a chunk of the horse's mane right behind the poll and begin pulling the animal's head straight back toward you. Trying to pull the



Any horse who routinely becomes cast should be checked by a veterinarian for neurological damage. For horses who have no underlying medical issues, the simplest solution is to put up a barrier of some sort—using boards or banking the bedding higher around the edges of the stall. There are also installations on the market like the Anti-Cast Safety Strip, which can be attached to either the walls of a stall or the sides of a paddock. The strip works as a leverage point to enable the horse to push itself away from the wall or fence.

horse away from the wall or fence by his halter could result in damage to the spine.

Once the horse is back far enough from the obstruction, he

It's usually a relief to know your horse is comfortable enough to lie down and rest in his stall, but horses who bed down close to a wall, especially without banked bedding, run a risk of casting.

should be able to bend his legs, roll over and stand up. If he's still having problems standing up, you'll need to free his hindquarters, using his tail.

➤ **If You're By Yourself**

Get a lead rope or longe line. Taking care to not get in the way of the flailing hooves, loop your rope over the leg closest to the wall or fence, just above or below the fetlock. Carefully pull back and let the horse roll itself over.

Don't knot the rope around the horse's legs, but fashion it as a slipknot, so that it can be quickly released as soon as the horse is able to stand.

Once your horse is back on all fours, check him over for any injuries or signs of stress. 🐾