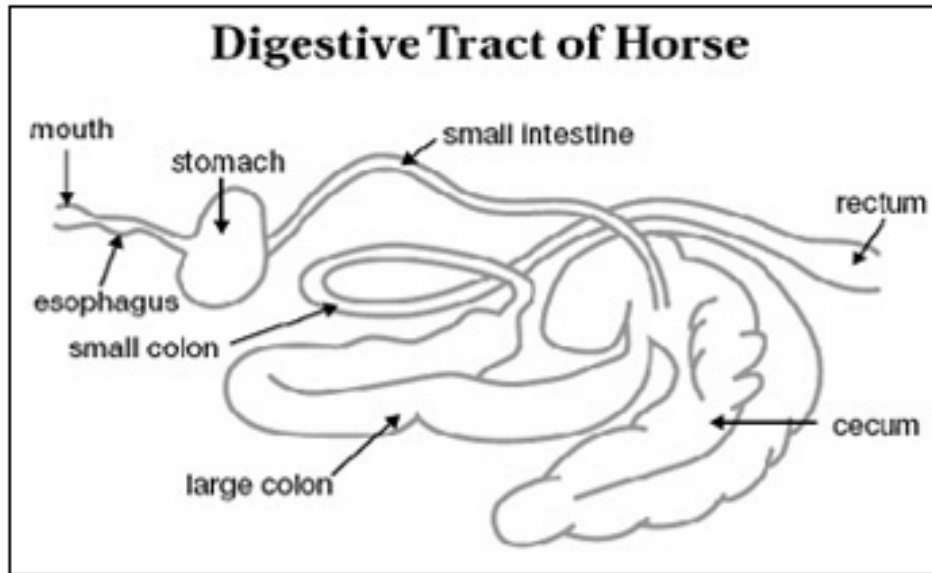


Digestive System



http://www.biovance.com/bio_i/digestive_tract.jpg

The digestive system is important in breaking down food so that it can be absorbed and used by the body for energy, growth, and maintenance of the animal. Horses have sensitive digestive systems, so it is important to understand its anatomy.

Mouth- The mouth is the first part of the digestive tract. This is where the food enters and is chewed by the horse's teeth, also known as mastication and the food is wetted the food with saliva.

Esophagus- The esophagus is used to carry water and chewed food, known as a bolus, down towards the stomach for further digestion. It is located on the left side of the horse's neck. The esophagus helps move food down the neck with movement called peristalsis, with wave- like contractions. Food enters the stomach through a one way valve.

Stomach- There is little digestion in the stomach of a horse and it is the smallest out of any other farm animals!!

Small intestine- The small intestine is 70 feet long!! It is where most of the protein that a horse eats is digested. Many vitamins and minerals are also absorbed here. The small intestine is divided into three parts; the duodenum, right after the stomach, the jejunum, right after the duodenum, and finally the ileum, right before the large intestine.

Large intestine- the large intestine of a horse is divided into 4 very important parts including:

Cecum- The cecum is the first part of the large intestine. The cecum is the location of bacterial fermentation, just like the rumen of a cow. It is located on the right side of the

horse. The bacteria located here help break down the fibers or roughage that a horse consumes, something that humans cannot do (because they don't have these digestive bacteria).

Large Colon- The large colon is where water is absorbed and fecal matter begins to form

Small colon- Most of the water absorption from fecal matter occurs here.

Rectum- The last portion of the large intestine and colon where feces sits until it leaves the body through contraction.

Anus- The end of the digestive tract. The anus is a muscle that closes off the digestive tract to the outside until feces is emptied

Fun Fact- A horse produces 33- 50 pounds of feces per day.