

Horse Care - A Quick Reference to Frequently Asked Questions

Horses can bring many new situations to their owners, some of those can leave the owner with a few questions.

Always consult and follow the guidance from the professionals you are partnering with for your horse's care - your veterinarian, farrier, trainer, barn manager, and/or other equine professional.

There are some general guidelines that will help guide decisions you make as an owner.

Hydration is essential to the overall health of your horse. A horse drinks up to 15 gallons of water per day, so always ensure your horse has access to clean, fresh water at all times.

A daily electrolyte is typically recommended - consult your veterinarian

Horses are grazers - meaning they constantly take in food throughout the day. The majority of their diet should consist of forage. Horses should be eating 1-2% of their body weight in forage every day. For a 1,000lb horse, that is 10-20lbs of hay/roughage.

Many owners will also consider a multi-vitamin supplement, grain, and/or balancers.

In addition to dietary needs, horses thrive better being with other horses/companion animals than being alone. They also need access to safe and sturdy shelter, away from the elements.

Two professionals a horse owner should partner with is their equine veterinarian and farrier. Consult your veterinarian at least once a year to ensure your horse is up-to-date on vaccinations, dental, and deworming. Optimal hoof health is critical for keeping your horse feeling and moving well. Work with your farrier for a schedule that is best for the needs of your horse.

There are some basic horse health items that all owners need to be familiar with, in addition to knowing what is "normal" for their horse.

TPR: Temperature, Pulse, and Respiration

Understanding your horse's resting TPR is vital especially to know when something is not normal.

Normal vital sign ranges for horses are:

- T = 99.5 - 100.5°
- P = 28 - 42 beats per minute
- R = 8 -12 breaths per minute

It's important to figure out what is normal for YOUR horse. Let's start with Temperature.

How to Measure Your Horse's Temperature

Every barn should have at least one thermometer. For basic barn use, a regular digital thermometer will work. (There are large animal thermometers. In addition, there are regulations on thermometers depending on certain governing equine bodies - for example, dressage requires glass thermometers).

When using a digital thermometer, make sure you hold onto the thermometer as you take your horse's temperature rectally.

- Some lubrication before insertion and a handler is helpful. Be safe!
- Stand to one side and gently move the horse's tail out of the way.
- Slowly insert the thermometer nearly all the way inside, allowing the horse to adjust. Take your time and be patient. The digital thermometer will beep when it is ready.
- Remove slowly and read the number.
- Clean the thermometer by wiping it off with a soapy damp cloth then remember to write the temperature down.

"Temp" your horse several times, at different parts of the day, to determine what is normal for them.



How to Measure Your Horse's Pulse

There are three ways to measure your horse's pulse (also known as heart rate).

1. You can use your fingers to feel for a pulse in an artery.
2. A stethoscope to listen to the heart.
3. A heart rate monitor.

Where to check the pulse on your horse



With someone holding your horse or have them tied, squat next to their front left leg, facing forward. With your right palm touching the back of the leg, thumb to the outside and fingers to the inside, start at the knee and run your hand down the leg until you reach the ankle, or fetlock. Very lightly press your thumb and middle finger against the leg, at the level of the fetlock. Begin to slowly slide your entire hand backward, until your thumb and middle finger nearly come off the back of the leg. Change the pressure inward until you feel the pulse.

Count the pulse over 15 seconds and multiply by four, this will give you their pulse/heart rate in beats per minute.

You can use a stethoscope to find your horse's pulse. First, slide the head of the stethoscope forward underneath your horse's elbow on the left side until you hear the heartbeat.

Count only one of the sounds (lub-Dub is one beat) over a 15 second period, then multiply by four to find the best per minute

How to Count Your Horse's Respiratory Rate



Taking your horse's respiratory rate can be accomplished in three ways.

*by watching the nostrils flare

*by watching the flank rise and fall

*by listening to the trachea or lunge with a stethoscope.

One breath (inhalation and exhalation) is a complete cycle.

Count the breaths for at least 30 seconds and multiply by two or count for one minute, to find your horse's respiratory rate in breaths per minute