

Horse Behaviour

Horses are prey animals, which means they depend on a very fast flight mechanism to naturally survive, commonly classed as spookiness to us. The body language of a horse is unique to the equine species, as a highly social animal, they communicate their emotions and intents to herd mates through both vocalisation and body language. It is important as a handler to be aware of these for example, a swishing tail shows irritation, ears back show warning and aggression, and flared nostrils show they are alert or excited.

Diet & Nutrition

Horses are non-ruminant herbivores (hind gut fermenters). They have evolved as grazers that naturally spend around 16 hours a day grazing pastures.

A wild horse covers 30-40 miles on an average day (of that 10-20 miles is just seeking food and water), which is why in the domestic horse many medical issues can occur from lush grass, overfeeding and a lack of exercise. It is important to always provide clean fresh water, feed little and often and feed plenty of forage

However, it is important when feeding to also consider:

- Equine condition
- Equine age
- Equine size and type
- Work output
- Time spent stabled or grazing
- Time of year

Enrichment

Equines can become bored and frustrated, especially if they have limited exercise or interaction with others as they prefer to be roaming and grazing with their herd.

However, if for some reason your equine does need to be stabled for prolonged periods there are a few ideas to keep them mentally stimulated:

- Scratching mat - this can be as simple as an old broom head
- Hanging licks, succulents, or plants such as willow places around the stable.
- Stable mirrors, to give the illusion of another horse
- Horse treat balls
- Carrot stretches or short walks if they cannot do prolonged exercise
- Grooming - gives a release of beneficial hormones

TPR

- Temperature: 37.2-38.1 °C
- Pulse: 32-44 bpm
- Respiration: 10-24 breaths/minute

Common Health Issues

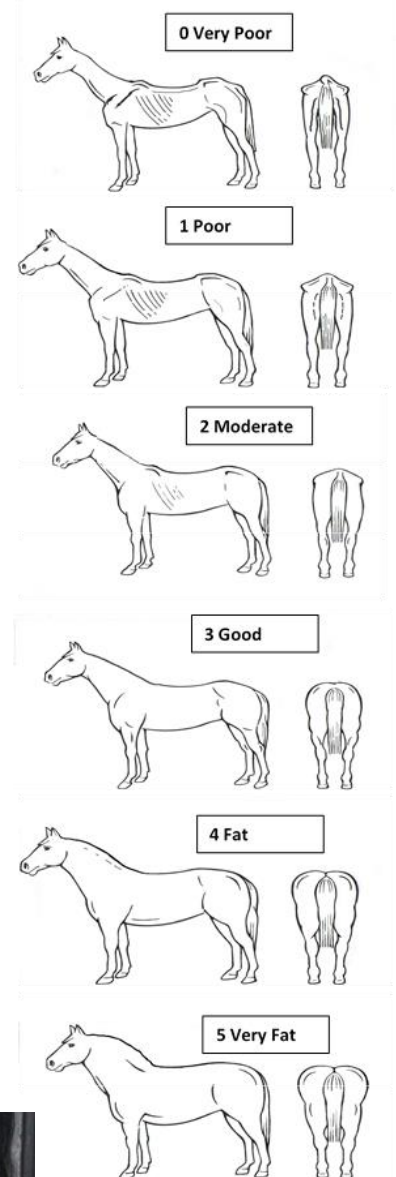
Obesity:

Equine obesity is a growing problem with 41% of horses and 26% of ponies being considered obese (2020). An obese equine is subject to serious health issues; therefore, it is important to body condition score (BCS) to monitor any weight loss or gain of your equine. On the right you can see some pictures dictating what an equine may look like on the 5-point scale.

When conducting a BCS there are three main areas to focus on, the pelvis, back and ribs and the neck an ideal score will have good coverage of the pelvis ribs and back with no crest (except stallions), visibility of prominences or the appliance of pressure to feel bony prominences would put them under or over the ideal weight.

Common issues:

- Cushing's: Caused by a tumour in the pituitary gland that causes insulin resistance; signs are, excessive drinking, urination, incorrect shedding.
- Colic: Pain in the abdomen for many reasons, for example, intestinal blockage, high grain diets, sand ingestion, dental issues, worming or internal twisting.
- Ulcers: The sensitive portion of a horse's stomach is prone to ulceration if emptied, therefore it is important to reduce stress, feed little and often and give forage (in small, holed nets or with the use of grazing muscles if on strict diets).
- Laminitis is an inflammation of the laminae of the foot and is the most common cause of lameness in a non-working equine and is often undetected. Equines with laminitis are:
 - Reluctant to move
 - Show a short stride
 - Recumbent for more time than usual
 - Likely to show a laminitic stance (as seen below)



Dentition

We recommend yearly dentist visits; these may need to be more frequent in older equines. If an equine is having difficulty eating, stops eating or develops bad breath a dentist needs to be called immediately. We highly recommend having any equine sedated whilst undergoing their dental work to reduce stress and prevent any harm coming to anyone involved in the procedure.

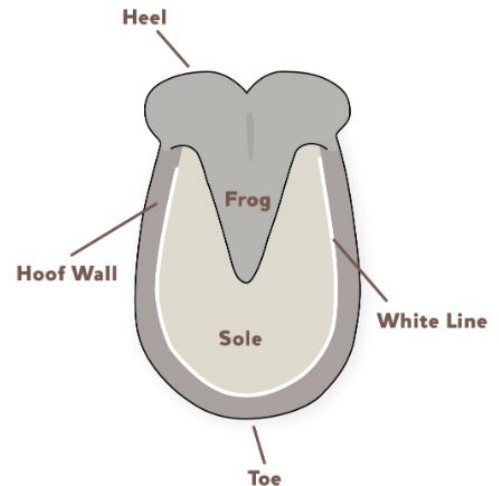
Farrier

Most of our equines are barefoot and generally require the farrier every 8 weeks (this time frame can range from 6-10 weeks). However, those that are shod should be seen every 6 weeks.

The most notable saying is 'no foot, no horse'. In addition to regular farrier visits you should also pick your horses feet out daily to prevent problems from foreign debris that could lead to bruising, abscesses, or lameness. If the feet are weak or flaky it is important to apply hoof oil to provide the foot with moisture and to give a supplement such as biotin to help strengthen the foot.

One common issue found is thrush.

This is an infection of the underneath of the foot, particularly the frog and is associated with keeping an equine in wet conditions. It has a distinctive unpleasant smell. To treat, the foot must be kept as clean and dry as possible and iodine or dilute hydrogen peroxide.



Vaccinations

A flu and tetanus vaccination are required annually, and full recorded information of the past treatments can be found in the vaccination section of the passport.

Parasitology

There are many different approaches to the worming of animals, but the most recent research has shown that a mix of egg counting and tapeworming for Spring and Autumn provides a good level of coverage and reduces the issue with over toxicity and wormer resistance. At Raystede we do faecal egg counts via our vet in Winter and Summer and tapeworm in Spring and Autumn.

The other practice we follow when doing this to remove excessive chemical exposure is to alter the chemical compound annually used in our wormer. For example:

- Year 1: Pyrantel embonate based tapewormer (Pyratape P or Strongid P),
- Year 2: Moxidectin/ Praziquantel based tapewormer (Equest Pramox)
- Year 3: Ivermectin/ Praziquantel based wormers (Eqvalan Duo or Equimax)









When egg counting, the veterinarian responsible for taking the count will be able to recommend the most suitable wormer. They will also advise on if the animal needs to be wormed- which is normally for any count above 200epg.









It is imperative that preventive programmes are in place to balance parasite control and preserve anthelmintic effectiveness. These simple controls are:

- Dung removal at least twice per week, at current we do this daily, which is preferable in smaller pastures.
- If composting the manure this should be left a minimum of six weeks before spreading.
- Co-grazing with ruminants (sheep/goats/cows) is useful as they can clear up parasitic burdens on fields and are not affected by the larvae, which die within the ruminant.

Fencing

Safety and security are key for any equine. Below is a table picturing suitable fencing. Problem areas may be resolved with electric tape and posts and ideally all fencing should be 4ft high.

Type of fencing	Boundary fence	Internal fence	✓ Examples	✗ Examples
Post and rail	✓	✓		
Wooden post and electric tape	✓ Needs to be fed by mains electric	✓		
Plastic post and electric tape	✗	✓ At least two strands and a suitable distance apart to prevent climbing through		
Hedge	✓ Must be thick and free of poisonous plants	✓ Must be thick and free of poisonous plants		

Type of fencing	Boundary fence	Internal fence	✓ Examples	✗ Examples
Just barbed wire/wire	✗	✗		
Chest height barbed wire and stock netting/hedge	✓ The wire needs to be taut and preferably barbed wire is lined with electric tape	✓ The wire needs to be taut and preferably barbed wire is lined with electric tape		
Stone wall	✓ Prefer electric tape in front of dry stone walls	✓		
Ditches	✗ Unless electric tape in front A well-constructed Ha-Ha or similar would be fine.	✗ Unless electric tape in front		

Shelter

It is important to have a stable or shelter available for equines to allow them to shelter from harsher weather elements, be it blazing sunshine or torrential rain. The BHS recommend that a stable for a horse is 12x12ft and a pony stable is 10x10ft, both with sufficient headroom for the animal to rear without hitting their head. It is also advisable to secure a bottom bolt latch to stop escape artists. We can give you bedding recommendations based on the specific equine you are enquiring about as some are not allowed straws or dustier materials.

If the horse is free moving there is also the option of communal barns or field shelters, care should be taken to monitor that all animals have access to food and water and have adequate space to rest. If there is an aggressive animal in the group, they should be segregated.

Insurance Guide

Every horse that goes out on loan from Raystede must have a current 3rd party/ public liability insurance cover. Proof of insurance must be provided each subsequent year. There are several options which are acceptable. As follows:

1 Society Membership.

The British Horse Society, British Dressage, British Driving, British Eventing, The Pony Club and World Horse Welfare. All offer 3rd party cover as part of the membership.

NB The name of the horse will not be on the membership card, but the name of the borrower will be as well as the expiry date.

2 Pet Insurance

All pet insurance has 3rd party cover included in their policies. Pet Plan, Animal Friends, NFU, Horse Insurance Ltd etc.

NB The name of the horse is normally on the policy as is the expiry date. But with Luna policies, (28-day payments) the expiry date is not obvious. It is alright to assume that, in this case, the insurance lasts a year from the date on the top of the policy document.

3 Business Premises

By law all Farms, Riding Stables, Livery Yards and Racing Stables must have a comprehensive insurance cover. This will include Public Liability Cover.

NB The only part of the policy that we need on record is the Public Liability Certificate, never the Employees' liability cover.

4 House Insurance

Borrowers sometimes have public liability cover built into their house insurance.

NB If this is not obvious on the policy document the borrower should ask their insurance company to confirm to the Raystede Equine Team by email that they are covered.

5 Other

Occasionally we are told that there is no paperwork available to prove cover. In that case the borrower should ask their insurer to provide us with confirmation.

Legislation

Owners must also be aware of government regulations and codes of practices when caring for their equines. From 2004 all equines must hold a valid passport, and from October 2020 all equines must be microchipped by law. It is important to comply with the guidance in the Animal Welfare Act (2006), details on these requirements can be found at: [Code of practice for the welfare of horses, ponies, donkeys and their hybrids \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428222/code_of_practice_for_the_welfare_of_horses_ponies_donkeys_and_their_hybrids.pdf)