

HORSE CARE INFORMATION

Keep animals in a clean, sanitary shelter that is dry and draft free.

Maintain stalls free of sharp objects and with ample natural light.

Remove manure and damp or dirty bedding. Flies multiply around these and lower a horse's or pony's resistance to disease. They also suck its blood, pass on diseases, and cause the animal to become confused and irritated because of the constant need to fight off pests. Good commercial sprays are helpful, as long as they are not sprayed on feeds, in water, or in other areas where they can come into contact with animals. Haul manure away or spread thinly on pastures twice a week, keep stalls dry, and remove garbage or waste materials.

Use a level-clay or packed-gravel floor.

Supply clean water daily. Be certain that water is not frozen during the winter.

Groom a horse or pony frequently during its early life, to promote good health and to help it be more manageable and trusting.

Since internal parasites are common in horses and ponies, arrange for a veterinarian to check a young animal's fecal sample every three months.

Castrate young colts between one and two years of age.

Check fences and corrals for loose posts.

Do not allow a blanketed horse or pony to stand in the rain. Do not halter a horse put out to pasture, because a wet halter can shrink and injure the animal.

Provide a horse or pony that is out to pasture with shade and water.

A good pasture has green grasses or mixtures, including alfalfa or clover (not grazed over or one- or two-inch stubble), and is clipped to prevent high growth and weeds.

If necessary, use several feed boxes (in a group, one animal may try to dominate the others). During winter, or when pastureland is inaccessible, provide clean, sweet-smelling hay and good-quality grain. A reputable feed dealer can tell you about feeds.

Watch for digestive disturbances, such as colic. A full, rich pasture can be bad for a horse that is not used to it.

Some owners are guilty of overfeeding and underexercising; do what is best for an individual animal. In general, feed at least two times a day. Give working horses periodic rests.

Protein is important in feeding a horse or pony. Ask a veterinarian about proper protein supplements.

Salt always should be available to horses and ponies whether or not it is in a salt box or mixed with grain. Minerals, calcium, and phosphorus are other important elements in a horse's or pony's diet.

A horse depends greatly on having healthy feet that feel good. Keep feet clean, prevent them from drying out, and trim them to the proper shape and length. Learn the parts of a horse's feet. Clean and check feet for stones, sores, and other problems every day. Talk to a veterinarian about ways to maintain moist hooves and about finding a good farrier. If hooves are not trimmed approximately once a month, the wall of a hoof may break off.

Keep teeth in good condition by asking a veterinarian to check them every few months.

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