

Basic Equine Care



Terminology

Equine – horse, asses, mules, donkeys, zebras, ponies or any other member of the equine family.

Female - Mare

Young female - Filly

Male - Stallion

Castrated male - Gelding

Young male – Colt

Green – minimal training, use caution when handling

Broke – trained in ground manners and under saddle (to be ridden or driven by a human)

Halter – harness that is placed upon horse's head to lead/control the horse, usually a lead rope is attached to it.

Horse Care Recommendations

Fresh, clean, potable water should be available at all times. This is equally critical in winter and summer to avoid dehydration and colic. State law requires "all horses shall have available a sufficient quantity of fresh water to maintain hydration." (NH RSA 435:13) Snow is not an acceptable water source. Multiple water sources are preferable.

Feeding Horses

Horses should be fed a quality pasture grass or a complete hay diet consisting of good quality forage. As a general rule an adult horse should eat 20 lbs of hay per 1000 lbs of bodyweight per day. This only a general rule and will need to be adjusted for ponies, varying size horses, and senior horses. Since bales sizes and weight vary greatly it is important to measure in pounds versus flakes, partial bales, pads or charges. It is best to consult your veterinarian on the correct ration balancing for weight of hay and/or concentrated feeds. A partial diet may also be fed including good quality hay in addition to oats, sweet feed, or other grains. A "complete" grain type feed may be appropriate for those horses that cannot eat hay because of health problems or as advised by a veterinarian. For concentrated feeds, such as grain, feed-

ing several smaller meals throughout the course of the day is preferable to feeding one large meal only once of day. Good quality pasture or hay should be available continuously throughout the day.

It is preferable that hay and grain not be thrown on the ground, which could lead to infection or reinfection from parasites, but rather placed in a manger or hayrack, or in the case of grain, in a bucket or suitable container. All feed should be rotated and kept dry to avoid mold.

Salt blocks are recommended—either white salt or preferably trace mineralized salt (red blocks).

Hoof Care

Hooves require trimming approximately every 6 to 12 weeks. A horse does not always require horse shoes. Shoeing depends on the condition of the horse's feet, the type of work the horse does, the surface it travels on, and how often it travels. Horse hooves should be cleaned on a daily basis, by being picked out with a hoof pick to remove mud, dirt and stones.

Shelter Requirements (From NH Law)

435:14 Shelter Available. – Horses shall be provided either:

- I. An adequately ventilated, dry barn with stalls of sufficient size so that the horse is able to lie down, and shall be provided adequate and suitable exercise in arenas, barn yards, paddocks or pastures; or
- II. A roofed shelter, with at least 3 sides from November 1 through April 15, shall be provided for horses kept in paddocks or pastures, and said horses

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shall not be kept tied but shall be able to move around freely.

Fencing

Horses should also have adequate fencing to ensure they do not run at large. Fencing should be checked on a regular basis to ensure it is secure. Wood, electric fence, woven mesh and pipe/steel fencing are common; barbed wire fencing should not be used with horses. Barbed wire is dangerous and may cause severe injuries to the horse.

For further clarification on accepted animal husbandry practices for horses, please contact The New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, Division of Animal Industry, www.nh.gov/agric/divisions/animal_industry

Veterinary Care

Horses should be examined by a NH licensed veterinarian at least once a year. The examination usually includes annual vaccinations and a physical examination.

New Hampshire state law requires that every equine imported into New Hampshire must be accompanied by a current certificate of veterinary inspection documenting a negative equine infectious anemia test (e.g. Coggins test) within the six months prior to entering the state.

Teeth should be checked annually and floated (filed down) if necessary.

Horses should be de-wormed every three months ideally, but at least in the spring and fall.

Possible Signs of Illness, Negligence or Intentional Cruelty

Appearance of Animal: Thin (ribs, hip bone and vertebrae prominent); halter and other harness or saddle sores; excessive hoof length; a hoof which is spongy on the bottom and has a foul odor; poor coat (dull, matted); bite wounds from constant fighting with other horses.

Housing Conditions: Lack of fresh water or available food; no shelter; overcrowding; no place to lie down; excessive manure build-up; standing on muddy ground with no dry areas. Note: Insufficient manger space for the number of horses can result in a competitive situation which causes the weakest animals to be excluded from the food source.

Behavior: Head down and unresponsive; inactive; no appetite; indifferent to surroundings and visitors; excessively fearful; odd standing behavior (not putting weight on one leg), lying on the ground excessively, standing with weight on hind quarters, and resting chin on fence rail to get weight off forefeet can all be signs of lameness, founder, or laminitis all indicate a need for veterinary care.

Reporting Animal Cruelty

Suspected animal cruelty should be reported to the police department of the town in which the cruel action or neglect occurred. Caller should leave name and contact information for a follow-up response.

Additional Resources

NH Rules on Treatment of Horses

www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rules/state_agencies/agr3700.html

Unwanted Horse Coalition

www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org

The Horse

thehorse.com/

Horse Care Book

neacha.org/resources/equinecarerhaf.pdf



For more information about animal cruelty, visit
www.nh.gov/humane