

# My Horse's VITAL SIGNS AND HEALTH INDICATORS

A Fact Sheet brought to you by



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## T EMPERATURE



normal  
37.5 - 38.5C

*To check:* The best way to take the horse's temperature is rectally with a digital thermometer.

- ▶ Always clean the thermometer after use
- ▶ Environment can affect reading by 0.5-1C
- ▶ Exercise, stress or infections raise temperature

## P ULSE



normal  
38-40 beats/min

*To check:* Take your horse's pulse from an area under the jaw, beneath the tail at its bone or from an area on the side of the foot.

- ▶ Foal 70-120bpm; Yearling 45-60bpm
- ▶ Count for 15 seconds & multiply by 4

## R ESPIRATION



normal  
8-15 breath/min

*To check:* Watch or feel your horse's ribcage/nostrils for one minute. Be sure to count 1 inhale and 1 exhale as one breath (not as two).

- ▶ Respiration rate should not exceed pulse rate
- ▶ Wait at least 30min after work to check rate



## GUT SOUNDS

normal  
gurgling noises      call vet  
absence of noises

*To check:* Press your ear up against your horse's barrel just behind his last rib. Be sure to check from both sides.

## DEHYDRATION

- ▶ Horse's drink a minimum of 20ltr of water/day
- ▶ Horse's in heavy exercise or hot conditions can drink up to 70ltr of water/day

**Pinch** the skin on your horse's neck  
it should flatten back in **1 sec**

## CAPILLARY REFILL TIME

*To check:* Lift your horse's upper lip up and firmly press your thumb against his gums for 2 seconds to create a white mark.

normal  
refill time is **1-2 sec**



These simple checks will help tell if your **horse is healthy** or if you will have to **call the vet**. By being able to tell your vet these simple but crucial parameters during an **emergency** can be very helpful.

Your horse's vital signs should be **regularly monitored**, to give you a better idea of what your horse's normal vital signs are.

My Vet's Number

