

Online HorseCollege



Student Workbook

3.H.02 Horse Husbandry

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Horse Husbandry 3.H.02 Workbook

Students are to complete Horse Care 2.H.01 – 2.H.04 online assessments prior to attempting Horse Care 3.H.02 and to follow all recommended safety considerations.

Practical assessments for Horse Care 3.H are as follows

- 01) Stable Practices
- 02) Horse Husbandry
- 03) Illness and Injuries
- 04) Basic First Aid

These assessments incorporate the following unit from the SIS30710 Sport Industry Training Package which include the listed elements

RTE2121A Provide daily care for horses

- Prepare to work with horses
- Clean stables and surrounding areas
- Perform daily work program
- Select, catch and tie up horses
- Groom and rug horses
- Clean and maintain stable gear
- Monitor health and welfare of horses

RTE2104A Carry out regular horse observation

- Prepare to work with horses
- Carry out horse checks
- Deal with horse emergencies
- Provide veterinary procedure support

Further information about this assessment is available at www.training.gov.au

Horse Husbandry Introduction

The term 'husbandry' refers to raising and caring for animals, in this case, horses. In this section we will cover the basics of horse husbandry including signs of health, what to look for when performing daily checks of horses and touch on some advanced grooming.

The Healthy Horse

Certain signs and indications are perceivable when a horse is in good or poor health. These signs will produce an overall impression of the horses' health through appearance, behaviour and condition.

There will be some differences between each horse (such as, resting rates of respiration, pulse and temperature) as they are all individuals so it is essential that you get to know your horse.

Also there will be external factors which will have some influence over these signs of health. The sexual cycle, especially in mares and how the horse responds to some feeds may cause changes in regular signs of health and behaviour.

Physical signs of health will include:-

Feed and water-

Have a general idea as to how much water your horse consumes on average. Horses which are ill may drink more or less water but remember external forces may influence this also, in hotter weather a horse can drink upwards of 20 litres but in cooler weather this number may be reduced. If at a show or competition a horse may refuse water due to it smelling or tasting different from that at home.

An ill horse will often go off its feed and again external factors can influence this, for example changes in feed or changes in the quality of feed.

Bedding-

The stabled horse will keep usual habits in the stable. Some will shift bedding through walking or stamping feet so it is important to know what your horses' stall usually looks like when you arrive and when you leave. Bedding which has been flattened or hollowed could indicate that the horse has been rolling which could be a sign of digestive upsets.

Droppings-

Everyday your horse will drop an average number of droppings. A healthy horse will have droppings which are the same consistency, colour and smell. Manure passed by a healthy horse should be passed as well-formed balls with fine texture and a non-offensive odour. Depending on what the horse is being fed will determine the colour of droppings, colour should range from dark green to light green, yellow.

Urine-

Should be passed as an off-white to yellowish colour with a slightly thick consistency but with no excessive ammonia smell. Healthy horses may pass urine several times per day. Again, external influences can be sexual cycles, feed contents and high mineral content in water sources.

The Healthy Horse (cont.)

Movement-

Every horse will move or carry themselves in different ways. Movement should be free and easy, without reluctance or limping/favoring legs.

Temperature-

The normal range is 37.8-38.3°C (100-101°F). Again it is advisable to know your horses' normal readings. This can be determined by taking each morning and evening for several day, this will determine an average reading.

Respiration-

The normal resting rate is approximately 10-15 breaths per minute. To obtain an average for your horse, take a reading from 4 separate periods of 15 seconds when your horse is in a relaxed/resting state.

Pulse/Heart Rate-

Typically the heart rate ranges from 25 to 40 beats per minute (bpm) (rates can vary slightly between different sexes and ages). Again the horse should be in a 'resting' state when obtaining an average.

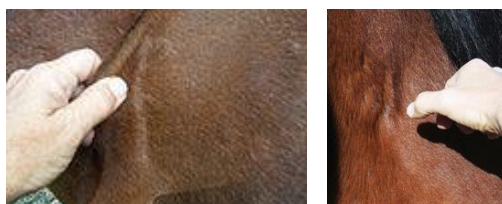
Capillary Refill Time (CRT)-

This can be tested on the horses' gums. Using your finger press firmly on the gum for 5 seconds then remove. The spot where your finger was should be a pale pink, the blood should fill into the spot in approximately 3 seconds, returning the gum to its original colour.



Skin Fold Test-

Performed by pinching a small piece of skin on the horses neck and releasing. the skin should pull back into the neck instantly, if the skin pulls back slowly it is an indication of dehydration.



Signs of a Healthy Horse



Alert and interested



In good condition



Shiny, sleek coat and supple skin (with hair length dependent upon breed and season)



Bright eyes



Ears are pricked and warm, not hot



The lower leg should be cool with the tendons and ligaments defined.

Signs of a Healthy Horse (cont.)



Hooves cool with no odour from the frog and a hard, clean sole



Sound, no lameness when moved



Have a good appetite



Slow, regular and quiet breathing. Rates should recover quickly after work



Heart rate should be rhythmic and clear



Well formed manure balls, which break-up when hitting the ground, no offensive odours

Urine clear with no excessive ammonia smell

Signs of the Unhealthy Horse

It is important that you get to know what is 'normal' for your horse so that you can identify abnormal changes when they occur.



Changes in normal behaviour. Uninterested or unwelcoming demeanour



Lying down, rolling, won't or can't get up



Changes in movement. Stiff movement or getting up awkwardly



Unusual or unexplainable sweating, with or without rugs

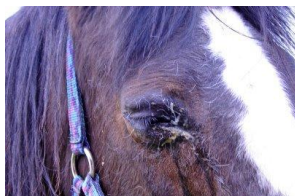
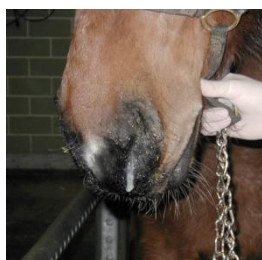


Favouring a leg



Changes in manure or urine frequency, consistency, colour or odour.

Signs of the Unhealthy Horse



Discharge from the eyes or nostrils.
Coughing or sneezing



Heat, pain or swelling in legs



Sores or unusual lumps or bumps on skin

Daily Health Checks

During your work with horses it will be part of your day to day routine to perform checks on horses. With experience, this will become an automatic part of your routine that you will perform sub-consciously. This means that you can perform daily checks whilst you're doing other duties such as feeding, mowing, riding or grooming.

What will you be checking for are things which may be un-characteristic or abnormal for the horse or its surroundings. For example a rug which has slid off to one side and if covered in dirt can indicate that the horse has been lying down or rolling.

But just because a horse has been lying down doesn't necessarily mean you have a serious problem, it will be common for some horses to lie down and others to not. Therefore it is important you get to know the individual characteristics of horses so you can identify when there may be a problem.

Housing:-

This is how or where your horse is kept. You will need to assess whether there has been any damage to fencing, gates/doors and walls (stabling). The floor or ground of your horses' housing can often be a good indicator of what they've been up to, for example if they have been galloping around there will be deep hoof marks in the ground or if they have been walking their stall the bedding will have shifted, often into a circular track.

Feed:-

Check your horses feed. Has he cleaned up all of the previous meal? If he left feed behind, what was it that he sifted out? Feed which hasn't been eaten should be disposed of as it tends to go off quite quickly, especially if it has been dampened. Also keep an eye on how much water your horse has drunk but don't forget that hot and cold weather will have some influence into the quantities your horse consumes.

Rugs:-

Rugs may need adjusting if the horse has been scratching, rolling or lying down as they will often shift in these circumstances. Broken rugs or rug attachments should be removed and repaired as they are dangerous to leave on a horse and may cause injury. There can be many reasons a rug can change positions on a horse, such as, differences in horse conformation, rug styles, horses scratching, rugs getting caught on fences or the horse running around at speed or playing. Rugs can be a valuable insight into the horses' previous behaviour.

Shoeing:-

A horses' hooves and shoeing should be checked daily. Hooves need to be cleaned at least once a day, especially in those that are shod. You need to check the shoe for damage and wear such as, missing nails, bent, loose or missing shoes and risen clenches. Shoes with such damage should be fixed by a farrier as soon as possible.

Daily Health Checks (cont.)

Horse:-

You will not only be checking the horses' physical well-being but also behavioural and characteristic changes. Note the horses' appearance, behaviour and condition.

Taking Vital Signs

Sooner or later you will need to take a horses' temperature, pulse and respiration rate. These signs will help to determine the overall physical well-being of the horse.

Taking the Temperature:-

It is best to have a helper to hold the horse incase it has any objections to the thermometer. You will need a thermometer, lubricant and warm water with a little antiseptic.

1. Remove the thermometer from its case. if you have a mercury thermometer you may need to shake it down so that the mercury sits below 37°C (98°F)
2. Lubricate a short way up the end of the thermometer
3. Have the horse restrained in a small area such as a yard. If necessary the horse can be stood beside a wall to help keep it still
4. Stand close to the hind quarters at the side of the horse
5. Bring the tail to one side
6. Keeping a firm hold of the thermometer, gently insert it into the rectum
7. Hold or angle it to one side so that it comes in contact with the rectum wall
8. If you have a mercury thermometer you will need to hold it there for about half a minute
9. Record the readings and clean the thermometer with warm water and antiseptic. Store safely



Taking the Pulse Rate:-

There are 3 points from which the pulse can be felt easily 1) the facial artery which runs under the lower jaw, 2) an artery on the inside of the horses' elbow, 3) an artery which runs on either side of the dock under the tail.

If you use a stethoscope place the scope on the chest just behind the elbow on the near side of the horse.

1. Count each 'lub-dub' as one beat
2. Make sure the horse is in a quiet area



Taking Vital Signs (cont.)

Taking the Respiration Rate:-

To get an accurate reading, make sure the horse is settled. You will need to watch the abdominal wall move. You may be able to watch the nostrils but these will only flare if the horse is breathing heavy.

1. Count each in-out movement as one breath
2. For accuracy count 4 separate periods of 15 seconds.



Horse Presentation

Pulling manes:-

This involves pulling longer strands of hair out of the horses' mane to make it all the same length and easier to plait. There are very few nerves endings at the base of the mane so most horses give minimal objection although some may dislike it more than others.

You will need a halter and lead rope to tie the horse up, and a mane or tail comb. It tends to be slightly easy with a smaller comb and if you pull the mane after the horse has been worked or exercised the mane will pull out easier because the skin pores will be open.

1. Start by combing through the mane to remove any knots or tangles
2. Then begin at one end and select small amounts of hair from under the mane (that way there will be no fuzzy on top of the mane when it grows back)
3. Grasp the ends of the hair in your fingertips and tease or comb the short strands of hair upwards towards the base of the neck
4. Twist the long strand around the comb (once will be enough)
5. Hold the comb and hair and give a quick, sharp, downwards pull and the hair should release from the mane

If you have too much hair twisted around the comb it will not come out easily and the horse is likely to object. It can also help to dampen the hair, particularly if it is fuzzy. There are devices available that are combs combined with a cutting edge which cut the mane after you have teased it. Thinning combs have a similar action. But never use scissors, they produce a 'bob' style cut which makes plaits difficult to anchor to the base of the neck.

For thick or long manes it may be necessary to pull over a few days.



This is the end result of a pulled mane. If necessary you could pull it shorter than this.



This mane has been done with a stripping blade. Currently it looks a little like a 'bob' cut. It will take a couple of months to even out

Horse Presentation (cont.)

Pulling tails:-

Tails need to be pulled over a longer period of time than manes because of more nerves endings in the dock. Pull the tail a little more each time you groom the horse. Pulling will make for a tidier, more manageable tail.

You will need to be careful how much you pull out because the tail will take longer to grow back.

The alternative to pulling tails is clipping with horse clippers alternatively this can be done with scissors (preferably with blunt or rounded ends) by a practiced hand but must be done **carefully** so as not to injure the horse.

You will use the same process to pull the tail as for the mane, with the exception that you will only pull hairs from the dock.

When you clip the tail the hair is taken off from both sides of the dock, starting from the top of the tail down to about the point of buttock. Sometimes it will be necessary to tidy the top of the dock as well.



A clipped tail

Horse Presentation (cont.)

Trimming:-

This involves the removal of long, untidy hairs from the horses' body, usually from the fetlocks, coronet, head and ears, wither, poll and tail. But in some breeds, like Clydesdales, it is part of show turnout to have long hairy feathers.

Using clippers the hair is removed quickly but care must be taken as some horses will not like the noise or even the feel of the clippers on their body. Seasoned show horses aren't usually bothered by them.

Before clipping a horse it should be shampooed to remove as much dirt, dandruff and scuff from the coat because this will make clipper blades blunt. Wet hair will do the same. Trimming can also be done with scissors (preferably ones with a blunt or rounded ends) and a horse razor but again care needs to be taken.

If the rest of the horses' body *isn't* clipped you will need to be careful not to take off too much hair.

It is safer to have a handler help you restrain the horse.

Fetlocks & Coronets:-



If using scissors use the comb to comb out and hold long strands then cut with scissors.

Clippers can be used in an upwards motion from the heel and around the coronet. It may be necessary to hold the leg to access areas close to the ground.

Head & Ears:-



When trimming ears pinch the sides of the ear together and trim off the excess that sticks out.

This should only be done with clippers.

The muzzle and under the jaw can be done with a horse razor but you will get better and quicker results with clippers.

Horse Presentation (cont.)

Withers & Polls:-



A trimmed bridle path (poll) will allow bridles, head collar or halters to sit comfortably on the horses head.

The bridle path will start from just behind the ears and forelock and can be approximately 2-5 inches long.

The hair can be removed with scissors (as always to so with care) and then tidied up with a horse razor.

Clippers, again will be quicker but have another person to help hold the horse while you trim this area.

Hairy withers can cause rubbing under saddle blankets and becomes a difficult area to plait. The hair can be removed in the same manner as the bridle path.

Tails:-



Have an assistant hold their arm under the horses' tail, this will help simulate how the tail will be carried when it is in motion.

Hold the hair together and using clippers or scissor cut the end off in a straight line.

It will help to keep the bottom of the tail level if you make the trim at a very slight angle, upwards towards the hind legs. By doing this the hair on top or outer side of the tail wont end up shorter than those closest to the horse.

Horse Presentation (cont.)

Horses which are rugged, particularly those that are heavily rugged or clipped sometimes get small patches of broken and frayed hair on their shoulders, withers or hips. This is from friction caused by the rug when the horse moves. It can be minimised by the horse wearing a bib underneath its rug. Bibs are usually made from satin or a similar material which will allow the rug material to slide easily when the horse moves rather than cause friction. Some bibs may also have extra padding in the shoulder area.



Extension Lesson

Over the next 7 days take and record daily rates of respiration, pulse and temperature to determine your horses' average rate.

Day	Temperature	Respiration	Pulse

Did you notice any changes or signs in your horse that suggested ill or good health? If so what were they?

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Recommended Reading

Footsteps

Sally Hinton & Joan Eccleshare

The BHS Veterinary Manual

P.Stewart Hastie

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The BHS Veterinary Manual

Diseases of the Horse

Authors:-

Sally Hinton & Joan Eccleshare

P.Stewart Hastie

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