**Horse Vital Signs**

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| **Body Part** | **Healthy** | **Symptoms** |
| **Eyes** | Healthy horse eyes are clear and bright, with eyelashes perpendicular to the corneal surface. | Horse has discharge or mucus in eyes.  Eyelashes are pointing downwards. |
| **Nose** | A healthy horse's nostrils are free of discharge, or discharge is clear. | Alert your veterinarian if you notice a greenish, yellow, or white “snotty” discharge. This could indicate a [respiratory](http://www.thehorse.com/topics/diseases-and-conditions/respiratory-problems) and/or [infectious](http://www.thehorse.com/topics/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases) disease brewing. |
| **Lungs/**  **Respiratory Rate** | [Normal respiratory rate](http://www.thehorse.com/articles/27822/normal-horse-temperature-heart-rate-breathing-rate): 10-24 breaths per minute. Measure the respiratory rate by watching the horse's flank move in and out (each inhale or exhale is one breath), watching the horse’s nostrils flare with every breath (do not place your hand or anything near his nostrils), or using a stethoscope to listen to the breaths as the air travels across the trachea when the horse inhales and exhales. This should sound clear. | If the horse’s respiratory rate is low you may want to call the vet.  If the horse was not performing exercise and the horse’s respiratory rate is extremely high, then you may want to call the vet.  . |
| **Skin**  **Hydration** | A hydrated horse will pass the skin tent test: Pinch his neck/shoulder skin and release; generally, the skin should snap back to normal in a one or two seconds. | If the skin takes longer to snap back it may indicate dehydration. |
| **Tendons and Ligaments** | [Tendons and ligaments](http://www.thehorse.com/free-reports/29999/tendons-and-ligaments)are tough, strong bands of soft connective tissue—collagen-rich materials that hold various body structures together. Tendons connect muscles to bones, whereas ligaments connect bones to other bones. | Heat or swelling in or surrounding these structures indicate injury. |
| **Body Condition** | Check your horse’s body condition by visually and manually assessing the fat covering his ribs, shoulder, withers, loin, tailhead, and neck. Ideally, a healthy horse is about a 5 or 6 on the 1-9 scale. | If body condition is too high, the horse could be at risk for metabolic disorders or founder.  If body condition is too poor, the horse may have other issues or just need a change in it’s diet. |
| **Heart Rate** | [Normal heart rate](http://www.thehorse.com/articles/20320/taking-the-heart-rate): 28-44 beats per minute. Use a stethoscope to listen to the heart on the left side of the horse, just behind the elbow in the girth area. If a stethoscope is not handy, you can take the pulse from the lingual artery (which has a circumference similar to a No. 2 pencil), which is on the bottom side of the jaw where it crosses the bone. Take the pulse for 15 seconds then multiply that number by four to determine heart rate in beats per minute. | Abnormal heart rate |
| **Digestive System** | Listen to your horse’s gut sounds by placing your ear or, preferably, a stethoscope, against both sides of the abdomen, high and low. A healthy horse’s gut sounds should be gurgling, with gaslike growls, "tinkling" sounds (fluid), and occasional "roars." | Prolonged silence indicates an abnormality and could indicate colic. |
| **Fecal Matter** | A healthy horse should produce well-formed fecal balls with noticeable forage stems but no real “chunks” of feed, a fairly uniform color, little odor, and no mucous covering. A small amount of liquid either immediately prior or following a bowel movement might also be normal. | Weese groups diarrhea in horses into four main categories:  1. *Infectious* e.g., due to bacterial infections such as salmonellosis, -clostridiosis, and equine proliferative enteropathy caused by *Lawsonia intracellularis*;  2. *Inflammatory* "Inflammatory bowel disease, a common problem in people, rarely causes diarrhea in horses since the large colon (which largely controls fecal consistency in adult horses)is not commonly affected; however, inflammatory diseases can occur," Weese notes;  3. *Cancerous* "Intestinal cancer such as lymphoma usually causes weight loss more often than diarrhea, but always needs to be considered with chronic disease," he adds; or  4. *Management-related*.  Warren assures us that many things--mostly benign---could cause colorful manure:   * Alfalfa generally results in very green fecal balls;   High beet pulp intake can lead to -reddish-brown fecal balls and a sticky, clear film around the ball;  In contrast, black feces (with the exception of neonate meconium--a newborn's near-black and pelleted first manure) indicate the horse could be bleeding from a higher point in the gastrointestinal system and blood has been digested before being excreted.  "Black feces is something that we don't usually see, even with significant bleeding, unlike in other species (such as dogs and cats)," Weese assures.   * For a horse unaccustomed to vegetable oil, too much can make his feces appear loose, grayish, and oily; and * Mucus covering the fecal balls indicates delayed passage (e.g., impaction).   Two colors that warrant a double take at your horse's piles (and a call to your vet) are red and black. "Red feces or feces with flecks of blood can indicate bleeding in the lower gastrointestinal tract, such as (from a) rectal tear," Weese explains. |
| **Body Temperature** | Normal temperature: 99-101°F; 37.2-38.3°C. Take your horse’s rectal temperature using a digital thermometer that’s been dipped in a small amount of lubricant. Make sure you hold the thermometer in place or clip a string attached to the thermometer to the tail. | Temperatures that are higher or lower than the normal range may be signs of disease. |