



ACF Riding Club



FACTS 101

Stages of a Horses Life

Horse Terms:

- **Colt** - A young male horse, 4 years old or younger
- **Filly** - A young female horse, 4 years old or younger
- **Foal** - A newborn or very young horse, male or female
- **Gelding** - A male horse that has been castrated, or gelded
- **Mare** - A mature female horse
- **Stallion** - A male horse that has not been castrated
- **Dam** - The term give to a female horse when she becomes a mother
- **Sire** - The term given to a stallion when he becomes a father
- **Pony** - A pony is not a baby horse, but rather a full grown small horse

How to Measure a Horse

Height – Calculating the Results

The horse is measured from the ground up to his withers (see parts of a horse). Use a measuring tape to find the number of inches then convert the measurement from inches to hands. A horse's height is measured in units known as "hands." 1 hand = 4 inches. A horse's height is usually considered to be 14.2 (14 hands, 2 inches) or taller when mature. Anything under 14.2 when mature is usually considered to be a pony. A miniature horse is a scaled down version of a standard-size horse standing no taller than 38 inches.

Correctly Writing & Speaking the Results

The correct way of writing "14 and one-half hands" is to write "14.2". It is not correct to write it as "14.5". When correctly written, the number before the period is the number of hands, and the number after the period is the remaining number of inches. The number after the period should NOT stand for a fraction. Horsemen usually say a measurement like this one out loud as "fourteen two" or "fourteen and a half."



Where Did The Term "Hands" Come From?

As stated above, a horse's height is measured in hands. The origin of measuring a horse this way is very old, but easy to understand. In days long ago people did not have the common measuring devices (like tape measures, etc.) that we do today. To measure a horse, they used what was handy (no pun intended): their hands. At various times in history and in different locales a "hand" was defined as the width of a person's hand using the fingers only, the

width of a person's hand using the fingers and the thumb, the height of a clenched fist, and possibly others. Somewhere along the way, the measuring unit of a hand was standardized to mean four inches. Though the origins are ancient, a hand is still the unit of measurement for horses that modern horse owners use today.

Vital Signs:

Normal Temperature for horses is 99 – 101 +/- 1 degree.

Normal Pulse Rate for a horse is 32 – 48 BPM.

Normal Respiratory Rate for a horse is 12 -16 breaths per minute.

Do You Speak "Horse-ish"?

You probably experienced how horses communicate with each other. Whinnying and neighing can be heard, if you ride away from other horses or if they meet. Mares express very different sounds when they are nursing a foal. Deep, smooth sounds, whickering can be heard then. You might also have heard it at feeding time from other horses. To warn others in the herd, they use an alarming snorting. If two new horses or ponies meet they are snuffling at each other and are very excited. Usually you can hear a sharp and loud squealing sound. They often face each other, squeal and lift a front leg or back up and swirl round, ready to kick. When a mare is in season, a stallion can express a loud roaring which is his mating call.

Have You Ever Wondered How Old A Pony/Horse Can Get?

The average lifespan of a horse is 22-28 years depending on which study you read. Some horses have been known to live well into their 40's. The best way to determine the age of a horse is by examining its teeth.

Happy January 1st Birthday!

Thoroughbreds all have the same birthday which makes it easier to keep breeding, racing, and showing records.



Things to Consider When Buying a Horse:

1. Breed of Horse
2. Temperament
3. Style of Riding
4. Riding Experience
5. Age of Horse
6. Level of Training
7. Overall health
8. Previous injury to horse

Did You Know That Horses Have (4) Frogs?

A frog is part of the horses hoof. Factors that affect the horses hoof: heredity, management, nutrition, shoeing/trimming, exercise. A horse's hoof is extremely complex and sensitive. When a horse puts pressure on its hoof, the blood is squeezed up the leg into the veins, thus acting as a type of pump. The hoof of a horse is like a fingernail; it keeps on growing and needs to be trimmed. Do you know that our equivalent to a hoof is the nail of our middle fingers and middle toes!

English or Western Saddle?

An English saddle is smaller, less bulky, and lighter than a Western saddle. The Western saddle has more accessory pieces, such as a different skirt, a horn, fenders, rear cinches, etc. and has a thicker seat, and usually leather stirrups. The English saddle has iron stirrups, thin stirrup leathers, and the skirt only covers the stirrup buckle, it does not extend below and behind the cantle. In place of the prominent horn is the smooth pommel.



What Is a Gait?

A gait is the horses' natural way of going. Most horse breeds possess (4) natural gaits. However, some breeds have a 5th, 6th or 7th gait that is either natural or trained.

- There are (5) Dressage Walks: collected, working, medium, extended and free walk.

WALK:

The walk is a natural **4-beat** movement. The horse always has two or three hooves on the ground. The walk is the slowest natural gait- it is the steadiest and most comfortable.



The horse lifts his hooves as follows:

- 1st beat - **right hind leg**
- 2nd beat- **right fore leg**
- 3rd beat - **left hind leg**
- 4th beat - **left fore leg**

TROT (English)/JOG (Western):

The terms trot / jog are steady **2-beat** movements. This gait has a period of suspension. The horse springs from one diagonal to the other. In between these springs, all four legs are off the ground. Since the trot has two beats each stride and a moment in mid-air, English riders rise up and down every-other beat (this is called "posting"). Western riders sit the jog.



The horse lifts his hooves as follows:

- 1st beat - **right fore / left hind**
- 2nd beat- **left fore / right hind**

CANTER (English)/LOPE (Western):

The terms canter / lope are **3-beat** movements. This gait has a period of suspension after each stride. This gait starts with the hind leg then leads to the front in a rocking motion. When you canter/lope, you keep your seat in the saddle (unlike the trot). Before learning to canter, make sure your balance and rhythm stays consistent with the horse during the trot.



The horse lifts his hooves as follows:

The Right-Lead Canter

- 1st beat-**left hind leg**
- 2nd beat-**right hind / left fore**
- 3rd beat-**right fore leg**

The horse lifts his hooves as follows:

The Left-Lead Canter

- 1st beat-**right hind leg**
- 2nd beat-**left hind / right fore**
- 3rd beat-**left fore leg**

GALLOP:

The gallop is a **4-beat** movement. This gait is similar to the canter, but the horse's legs move one at a time. The gallop feels just like a fast canter. When riding the gallop, raise your seat slightly out of the saddle, putting your weight in your heels.

Before attempting to gallop, you must be able to control the horse 100% and be able to ride all other gaits in balance.



The horse lifts his hooves as follows:
The Right-Lead Gallop:



1st beat-**left hind leg**
2nd beat-**right hind leg**
3rd beat-**left fore leg**
4th beat-**right fore leg**



The horse lifts his hooves as follows:
The Left-Lead Gallop:



1st beat-**right hind leg**
2nd beat-**left hind leg**
3rd beat-**right fore leg**
4th beat-**left fore leg**

Horses Teeth Never Stop Growing

Like humans, horses get two sets of teeth in their lifetime. An adult male horse has 40 permanent teeth and a mare may have between 36 -40, because they are less likely to have canine (bridle) teeth. At about age 10 a groove starts to form in the upper corner teeth it's called the "Galvaynes Groove".

Horses Are Able To Stand While Sleeping Without Falling Down

Horses experience two kinds of sleep, SWS (short wave sleep) and REM (rapid eye movement), and they most likely dream. They need about four hours of sleep out of every 24 and can sleep standing up by a special arrangement of locking joints – “Stay Apparatus”. Horses spend more energy lying down.



Did You Know That Equines Are Very Social Animals?

We call a group of ponies or horse's a herd. In a herd there is a clear defined hierarchy or ranking amongst the animals: the strongest, leading female is called alpha mare. One stallion can live together with about 20 -25 mares in a natural herd. It is very important therefore to keep a horse always together with another companion, because kept on their own they soon become lonely and depressed.

Water: Your horse must have plenty of clean, fresh water available at **ALL** times. A horse will drink 10 to 12 gallons of water each day, depending on temperature, humidity levels, ration content and work load. In the winter months, stock tank heaters will help stop ice build-up so that water is **ALWAYS** accessible to the horse. You can tell if a horse is dehydrated by pinching their skin, if it takes time for the skin to return from the pinch, they need water.

Hay: Horses thrive on routine, especially when it comes to food. Legume (alfalfa and clover) hay is higher in protein than grass hay so you need to feed less (weight) legume hay than grass hay.

Grass hay will keep the horse busy eating longer and prevent boredom. In some states, alfalfa is cut up to six times per year. Later cuttings may have higher protein content. Do not switch diets abruptly between grass and alfalfa. Hays in your region will vary in type and cost. Hay for horses must be mold and dust free. Consult your veterinarian as to what is best for your horse.



Arabian horses have one fewer vertebrae and one less rib than other breeds.

Horses have (5) highly developed senses: taste, touch, hearing, smell, and sight. They also have an enigmatic sixth sense, heightened perception, which is very rare in humans.

A horse has an acute sense of smell that allows it to detect nervousness in a handler, and old-time horsemen would smear aromatic fluid on their hands when dealing with a difficult horse.

Horses use their facial expressions to communicate. Their moods can be gauged with the help of their nostrils, eyes and ears. As well as using their tails for fly swatting, they use them to send signals to each other about how they are feeling.

Did You Know.....

- 30% of all horses are boarded.
- 70% of all horses are used for pleasure and recreation.
- 65% of a horse's weight is carried on the front legs.
- The largest horse museum in the world is the International Museum of the Horse in Kentucky.
- Horses have 16 muscles in each ear, allowing them to rotate their ears 180 degrees.
- Horses like sweet flavors (they love peppermint candies, carrots, apples, watermelon & gourmet horse treats) and will usually reject anything sour or bitter.
- The horses' natural response to fear is flight or fight.



What's Bugging Your Horse?

When its summer higher temperatures mean more flies, mosquitoes and gnats are hatching and pestering our horses. How can we control these irritating, disease-carrying annoyances and keep our horses healthy and comfortable at the same time? Remove Fly Breeding Grounds, Fly Repellents, Protective Fly Gear (Fly Masks), Vaccination and De-worm.



- The gestation period for a mare is 11 months, for a female donkey it is 12 months.
- Horses with pink skin can get sunburned.
- There are (3) categories of equine emergencies: critical, urgent and minor.
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- A horse is a member of the "Equus" family. This word comes from ancient Greece and means quickness.
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- Good conformation is wasted without disposition and heart.

Source: Some of the previous facts were provided by: facts.randomhistory.com, cowboyway.com, equusite.com & theequinest.com

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