

First Aid for Pony Club

The most important first step is to know what the normal vital signs are for our horses! These three things, the temperature, pulse and respiration rate can tell us a lot about how our horse is feeling, if they are well or if they are sick and need the vet.

Temperature

Normal Range: 98.5-101

Fever: above 101 – call Vet

What do I need?

1. Glass Thermometer with string and tail clip or digital thermometer
2. Lubricant
 - a. Vaseline or water
3. Rubbing alcohol
4. Towel
5. Watch

How do I check it?

Temperature is taken in the rectum.

Prepare your thermometer with a bit of lubricant on the end

Be careful, horses may try to kick

Lift the tail and insert thermometer

If using the glass thermometer, it will need to stay in the rectum for 2 minutes. Attach the clip to the tail so the thermometer does not get sucked into rectum

If using digital, keep a hold of the thermometer the whole time

Once finished, wipe thermometer with paper towel, then clean with soap/water and alcohol.

Pulse

Normal range: 30-45 beats per minute

Higher than this can mean your horse is sick, or has just been exercising

What do I need?

1. Hand or stethoscope
2. Watch

How do I take a pulse?

You will check one of three places

1. Facial artery

- a. Under the horses jaw
 - b. Size of a pencil
 - c. Feels like a piece of spaghetti under the skin
 - d. Use two fingers to gently push the artery against the jawbone
 - e. Will feel a slow pulse running through it (so much slower than yours!)
 - f. Count for 30 seconds and multiply x 2
2. Digital pulse (back of the fetlock)
 - a. Back of the fetlock on the front leg
 - b. Gently lay your fingers on it to feel the pulse
 - c. Count for 30 secs, then multiply x 2
3. Heart Rate
 - a. Use your stethoscope
 - b. Listen on the left side of the horses chest, down where the girth would be
 - c. Listen for the "lub-dub" which is one count
 - d. Listen for 30 secs, then multiply x 2

Respiratory Rate

Normal Range: 8-16 breaths per min

If distressed or after exercise, will be higher

What do I need?

1. Your eyes
2. Hands
3. Watch

How do I do it?

You will watch the horses belly in front of the flank(between the ribs and pelvis) as it moves in and out

One "in and out" counts as one

Watch for 30 secs, then multiply x 2

Try to check your horses TPR a few times before the next meeting, use an experienced person to help with temperature, but you can practice the pulse and respiration all you want! What did you find easy, what did you find hard?