

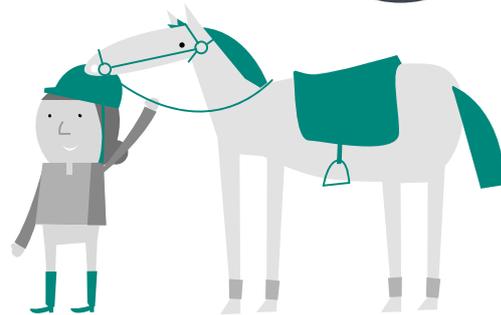
# HORSE HEALTH FAQs



## Make a big difference.

As part of Horse Health Week we are encouraging horse owners to notice the small changes in their horse that could make a big difference to early detection of problems or disease. Here is a list of frequently asked questions that could help you monitor and care for your horse.

**Please contact us if you have any further questions or would like any advice.**



## GENERAL DAY TO DAY CARE

### HOW DO I TAKE MY HORSE'S TEMPERATURE?

To take your horse's temperature insert a thermometer into the anus of your horse and hold against the side of the rectum. Low readings may be taken if the thermometer is inserted into a ball of faeces by accident. For safety reasons, do not stand directly behind your horse when taking the temperature. The normal range for a horse is 37.5°C – 38.5°C.

If you are unsure how to take your horse's temperature safely we will be happy to advise you.

**For more information see**  
[KBHH Taking on a new horse](#)

### HOW DO I TAKE MY HORSE'S HEART RATE?

The heart rate (pulse) can be measured using a stethoscope or by feeling the pulse on the underside of the lower jaw, below the large cheek muscles. Run your fingers along the jaw gently until you find the artery running across the jaw bone; it will feel a bit like string and will probably be pulsing more slowly than you would expect. The normal heart rate range is 28 – 44 beats per minute at rest. An increase in heart/pulse rate could occur as a result of exercise, excitement, stress or pain.

We will be happy to show you how to check your horse's pulse.

**For more information see**  
[KBHH Taking on a new horse](#)

### HOW DO I TAKE MY HORSE'S RESPIRATORY RATE?

The respiratory rate or breathing rate can be measured with a stethoscope, watching the sideways expansion of your horse's chest or watching the movement of the nostrils. The normal range is 8 – 14 breaths per minute at rest. The rate can often be raised when your horse has exercised, is excited, stressed, in pain or sick.

**For more information see**  
[KBHH Taking on a new horse](#)

### HOW DO I FIND A DIGITAL PULSE?

Digital pulses can be difficult to find in the normal horse and usually takes some practise. One of the best places to find them is the inside and outside of the fetlock joint, slightly towards the back.

Use your forefinger and with gentle pressure keep your fingers still and wait. A horse's pulse is slow at rest and often the fingers are moved away too quickly.

**For more information see**  
[KBHH Caring for your horse's feet](#)

### WHAT IS BODY CONDITION SCORING (BCS)?

BCS is a measurement of the amount of stored fat on the horse's body and is assessed through both look and feel of the horse. This gives us an idea of how well a horse's calorie requirements are being met. If possible, monitor body condition and bodyweight at the same time of day (in relation to the horse's routine) in order to reduce variation. In addition, having the same person monitoring each time would be best.

One Body Condition Scoring system is based on the American 1 – 9 system (adapted from Henneke et al 1983) which gives greater flexibility and detail for the score given. This looks at the neck, ribs and rump to assess the horse's overall condition and level of body fat which provides an indication of the calorie intake of the horse in question.

As a guide, a Body Condition Score of less than 4 would indicate that the horse's minimum calorie requirements are not being met by its diet, whilst one of more than 6 would indicate that its diet is supplying more calories than the horse requires which can lead to problems.

**For more information see**  
[KBHH Getting the right nutrition](#)

## PARASITE CONTROL

### HOW MUCH POO DO I NEED TO COLLECT FOR A FWEC?

Faecal worm egg counts require less faeces than most people think! Generally we only require a 3g sample of dung (about a handful!) which should be stored in a sealed container and be as fresh as possible, ideally less than 24 hours old. If you cannot get the sample to us within a reasonable time keep the sample cool/place in a fridge. Make sure the sample contains different areas of the dung and that the sample has been mixed.

**For more information see**  
[KBHH Parasite Control](#)

### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I WORM MY HORSE?

There are no set rules for how often a horse should be wormed. The best way to control your horse's worm burden it is to monitor it through repeated faecal worm egg counts. Your horse can then be wormed appropriately if required. By doing this you are ensuring that your horse is only given a wormer if necessary. Should your horse need to be treated it is then essential to choose a suitable wormer and use it at the correct dose. It is important to dose horses accurately for their bodyweight and to rotate the class of wormer used for EACH grazing season and not within the season.

## EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

### WHEN DO I NEED TO CALL A VET?

According to the Equine Industry Welfare Guidelines Compendium for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys a vet should be consulted urgently by the owner or person in charge of the horse if there are any signs of:

- Acute abdominal pain or colic
- Serious injury involving deep wounds, severe bleeding, suspected bone fractures or damage to the eyes
- Evidence of straining for more than 30 minutes by a mare due to foal
- Inability to rise or stand
- Inability or reluctance to move
- Severe diarrhoea
- Prolonged/abnormal sweating, high temperature, anxiety, restlessness or loss of appetite
- Any other signs of acute pain or injury
- Respiratory distress

A veterinary surgeon should be consulted within 48 hours of the owner or person in charge becoming aware of the following conditions:

- Marked lameness that has not responded to normal first aid treatment
- Injury that has not responded to normal first aid treatment

# HORSE HEALTH FAQs



## WHEN DO I NEED TO CALL A VET? Cont

- Signs suspicious of strangles or other infectious disease, nasal discharge, raised temperature, enlarged lymph nodes or cough
- Sustained loss of appetite
- Persistent weight loss
- Skin conditions that have not responded to treatment, including saddle sores and girth galls
- Other sub-acute illness or injury

Of course there are many other reasons why you might want to call us for assistance and never hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns or questions.

For more information see [KBHH Taking on a new horse](#)

## WHAT DOES COLIC LOOK LIKE?

Colic is essentially a term to describe belly pain and in horses is usually a result of stomach or gut pain. The causes of colic can be varied from gut spasm to stretching due to feed or gas to a blockage or disrupted blood supply. It is very important to know the signs of colic as early intervention gives your horse the best chance of a successful outcome. Horses can show a variety of signs from lip curling and restlessness in mild cases to lying down and getting back up and standing to urinate frequently in moderate cases. Signs associated with more severe colic include violent rolling, sweating, injuries to the body and head from thrashing around and rapid breathing. If you have any concerns that your horse is suffering from colic contact us for advice.

## WHAT DOES CHOKE LOOK LIKE?

Choke is a relatively common condition which occurs when something, usually food, blocks the oesophagus (gullet). The most usual signs are saliva and/or food material coming down the nostrils and/or mouth, depression and difficulty trying to swallow. When a horse is first choked it can appear quite alarming as the horse will make frequent violent attempts to swallow and appear to gag. Fortunately most cases of choke will resolve by themselves however if you are concerned that your horse might have choke contact us.

## DENTAL CARE

### HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GET MY HORSE'S TEETH CHECKED?

In the wild the horse's own chewing action generally wears his teeth evenly to prevent sharp edges forming over time. However, as it is now more normal for us to stable our horses and feed them concentrates, their normal chewing activity is reduced which can result in sharp edges forming, causing discomfort. Equally, expecting our horses to work in bridles puts other pressures on their mouths, which wouldn't normally happen in the wild. How often routine dental checks take place varies according to the individual horse and will depend on age and any pre-existing conditions. A good rule-of-thumb is that the teeth should be examined at least annually but in some cases checks might be undertaken two or three times a year.

For more information see [KBHH Caring for your horse's teeth](#)

## VACCINATION

### DO I NEED TO VACCINATE MY HORSE IF IT DOESN'T COMPETE?

Influenza is an airborne virus (under favourable weather conditions influenza can spread up to 5km!) which can move quickly and easily through a yard, consequently your horse doesn't need to leave the yard to be at potential risk. The disease is debilitating for your horse and can be distressing for you to witness.

Vaccination is one of the main tools for preventing influenza.

Horses who do not compete or leave the yard are also at risk from Tetanus, which is caused by a bacterium (*Clostridium tetani*) that is found in the soil. The bacteria enter the body through wounds, with punctures of the sole of the foot a common route of infection. The bacteria then cause disease by producing toxins that affect the nervous system. In the majority of cases, tetanus is fatal. Vaccination is the best way to protect your horse against tetanus.

Other diseases such as strangles and herpes may also be a threat depending on the disease risk to the yard where your horse is kept. We will be happy to advise you on the most appropriate vaccination protocol for your horse.

For more information see [KBHH Infectious disease & vaccination](#)

## HOOF CARE

### HOW DO I APPLY A POULTICE TO THE UNDERSIDE OF THE HOOF?

You may need to apply a poultice to your horse's hoof if he has an abscess. The key to making this a successful procedure is to be prepared! Before lifting the hoof have everything you need to hand;

- Scissors to remove old dressing
- Poultice, cut to size and prepared
- Self-adhesive bandage e.g. Vet Wrap
- Waterproof heavy duty tape e.g. Duck Tape, stuck in strips and cut into a square that will be large enough to cover the sole of the hoof and come up the sides

Lift your horse's foot and remove any old dressing or debris from the sole. Place the poultice onto the affected area, making sure it is large enough to cover the edges and the plastic side is facing out. Next use the self-adhesive bandage to cover the entire sole and hoof wall. Finally place your square of waterproof tape to the sole and smooth up the hoof wall. Add some more tape around the hoof wall to secure if required.

For more information see [KBHH Caring for your horse's feet](#)

