

ACTIVITY SHEET #5

What is 'Normal' for Your Healthy Horse?

INTRODUCTION

Measuring and recording your horse's vital signs and other health indicators can prove to be a very useful and important activity.

By recording this information when your horse is healthy, you will establish a "baseline".

In knowing his normal temperature, heart rate, pulse, etc. before an illness occurs, you will not only have a better idea of his condition at some future point, but you will also have important information to give to the veterinarian if a farm call is needed.



RECORD YOUR HORSE'S NORMAL HEALTH SIGNS

When your horse is healthy, use the printable chart (located at the end of this Activity Sheet) to record all of their normal vital signs and other indicators of health.

You should know what is normal for your horse for the following:

- Temperature
- Heart Rate
- Pulse
- Respiration
- Gum Color
- Capillary Refill Time
- Gut Sounds
- Manure Texture

This Activity Sheet will show you how to measure and record each of these.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

THERMOMETER

(Preferably a digital one). For taking your horse's temperature. Look for one with a flexible tip.



STETHOSCOPE

For taking your horse's heart rate, breathing rate and listening to gut sounds.



You can get these items from most pharmacies or veterinary suppliers.

RECORD SHEET

Print a copy of the chart at the end of this Activity Sheet to record your results.

HORSE VITALS CHART	
Name of horse	_____
Breed	_____
Age	_____
Date	_____
Temperature	_____
Heart Rate	_____
Pulse	_____
Respiration	_____
Mucosal Coloration (gums)	_____
Capillary Refill Time	_____
Gut Sounds	_____
Manure Texture	_____

Note any other physical features that are normal for your horse such as scars, lumps, etc.:

How to take your horse's temperature

The normal range is from 99 to 101°F (37 to 38°C).

Lubricate thermometer with petroleum jelly. Stand at the horse's hip and insert thermometer into rectum. Hold for 3 minutes or wait for the beep of the digital thermometer. Remove gently, quickly wipe it clean, and read the temperature.



How to take your horse's respiration rate

The normal rate for an adult horse is 10-20 breaths per minute.

There are several ways to take your horse's respiration rate. Watch your horse when they are standing quietly. Look at your horse's flank moving in and out or your horse's nostril expanding and contracting.

However, the most reliable way is to place the stethoscope on your horse's windpipe and listen for your horse's breaths.

Count the number of breaths in 30 seconds and multiply by 2 to get your horse's respiration rate per minute.



How to take your horse's heart rate

The normal rate for an adult horse is 25-45 beats per minute (bpm).

You will need a stethoscope and a watch with a second hand (or your cell phone). Count the beats for 15 seconds, then multiply that number by 4.

To measure the heart rate, place the stethoscope on the left side of the horse. Listen for the rhythmic "lub dub" heart sound. See photo for correct placement of the stethoscope.



How to take your horse's pulse

While the pulse rate can be similar to the heart rate, it may not be the same number. It is important to know how a normal pulse **feels**. When a horse is ill, the pulse might be weak, fluttery or pounding – important facts to note for the vet.

To take a horse's pulse, the easiest places to find are the arteries a few inches back from his eye or under his jaw line. (See photos).

Record how your horse's pulse **feels**.



How to check your horse's gum color

Gently open your horse's mouth and check his gum color. They should be moist with a good pink color.

How to check your horse's capillary refill time

The normal capillary refill time for an adult horse is 2 seconds or less.

To check the capillary refill time, press your thumb on the horse's gum for two seconds then release the pressure. The place you pressed will be pale for a moment and will then return to its normal pink color. The time it takes for the gum to return to pink should be two seconds or less.

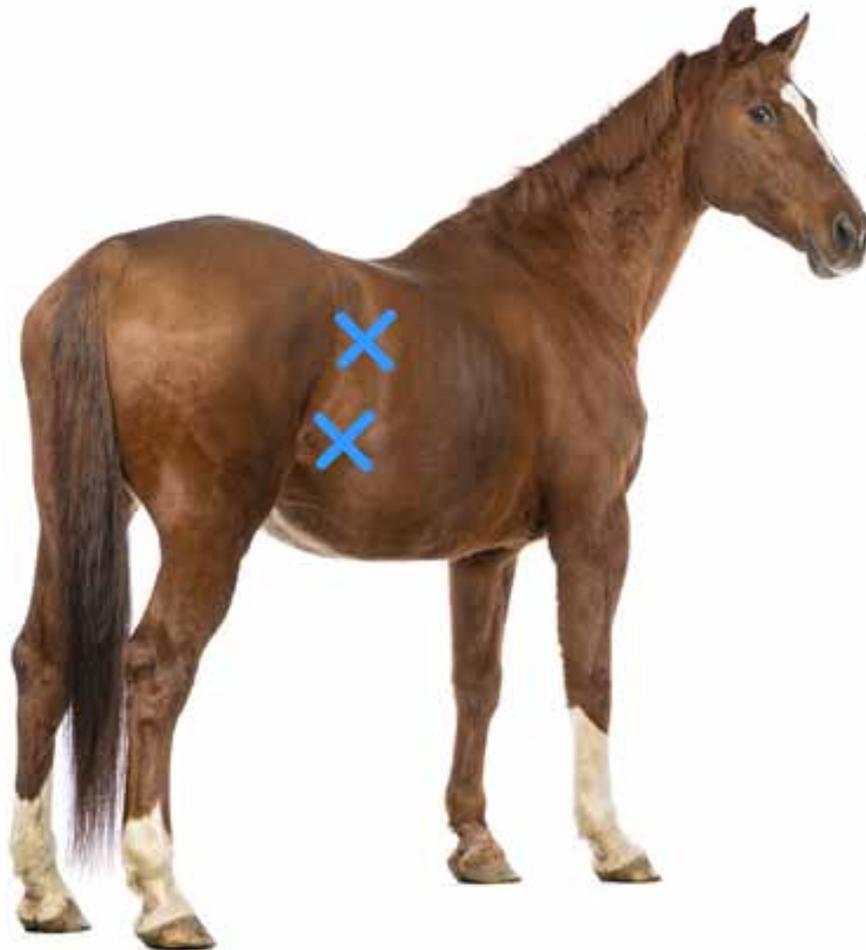


How to listen for your horse's gut sounds

After your horse has eaten (hay, grain, or grass), use your ear or a stethoscope to listen to his intestinal noises. If there is any concern over kicking, a stethoscope is a safer alternative.

Place the stethoscope in your horse's upper and lower flank area (see picture). Listen on both sides.

You should hear 1 to 3 sounds per minute. The sounds could be described as gurgling or sloshing.



Take note of your horse's manure texture

The texture of your horse's manure should also be noted. It should be moist but not too wet. You should be able to see well formed fecal balls. The color will depend on what your horse eats.



ACTION ITEMS



Complete the chart at the end of this Activity Sheet by recording your horse's normal vital signs. Keep a copy handy so you and your vet can refer to it if needed.

NOTE: Your horse's vital signs may differ depending on the season or daytime temperature. Print out 2 copies of the attached form and complete one during summer and one during winter. Take the recordings at the same time of day.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

If you aren't used to taking your own horse's vital signs, practice for a few days on several different quiet horses. You will gain a better understanding and feel for the different health indicators of individual horses and your ability to record a horse's vital signs will become much more accurate.

SUMMARY

Establishing a baseline of vital signs for your horse can prove invaluable for that inevitable day when the vet must be called.

Having the information handy on one page, including your notes of any other issues, is especially helpful because you won't have to rely on your memory!

COMING UP...

In future Activity Sheets we will be showing you how to teach your horse to be calm and relaxed for different procedures. These include de-worming and giving other medications, farrier and veterinary visits, hosing with water, plus lots of others.

QUESTIONS?

[CONTACT US](#) if you have any questions.

Join us here:

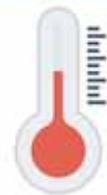
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AN ADULT HORSE'S NORMAL VITAL SIGNS



Temperature

99 - 101°F
(37 - 38°C)



Heart Rate

25 - 45
beats per minute



Respiration

10 - 20
breaths per minute

♥ horsetricks101 ♥

These are the 'normal' ranges for the vital signs of most adult horses.

The range can differ if the horse has been exercising or if the horse is very young. Use them as a guide and find out what is 'normal' for your individual horse. Record them on the following page.

HORSE HEALTH CHART

Name of Horse _____

Breed _____ Age _____

Date _____

Temperature	
Heart Rate	
Pulse	
Respiration	
Gum Color	
Capillary Refill Time	
Gut Sounds	
Manure Texture	

Note any other physical features that are normal for your horse such as scars, lumps, etc.:
