

Owning your first horse

Many people who own horses admit that they under-estimated the amount of care and input it requires. It is absolutely vital to carry out good research and seek professional advice prior to buying a horse. Here are a few points to get you started.

Environment

Many horse owners keep their horses and ponies at 'Livery Yards' - these are businesses which provide fields, often stabling and equestrian facilities for horse owners. They can vary in size, facilities available, standard and cost. It is worth putting in some very careful research in to finding the right livery yard for you and your horse - the British Horse Society should be able to start you on your search as well as offering extensive advice on horse ownership.

In the field, woodland, trees or a hedgerow can provide a certain amount of shelter from wind, rain and sun, however a shelter/shed will also work very well.

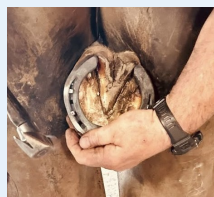
If your horse has access to a stable make sure, you provide adequate bedding (e.g. straw, wood shavings or wood pellets) and keep the stable clean by following a daily mucking-out routine of removing all droppings at least once a day and bedding that has been saturated by urine several times a week. Dirty bedding can affect the horse's welfare, affecting breathing, foot health and skin health. This in turn can lead to costly veterinary fees to treat any subsequent problems.

Diet

A well-balanced diet, specific to your horses' needs is very important. Your horse needs the right quantity and quality of food. Be careful not to overfeed - a horse doesn't stop eating when it is full. The most important part of a horse's diet is fibre - this can be sourced from grass whilst grazing, hay, haylage or chaff. A balancer is generally recommended to ensure sufficient vitamins and minerals are provided.

Ensure that a fresh water supply is available to your horse at all times. A healthy horse can drink up to 12 gallons of water per day.

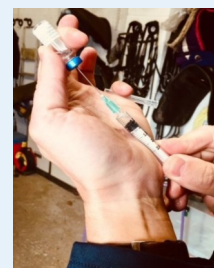
Seek veterinary advice on the most suitable feeding program.



Health

A daily check and care routine can help you keep an eye on your horse's wellbeing and spot any problems early. As a basic starter for their care routine, to keep your horse healthy:

- Groom your horse daily, checking all over the body, including picking out of the hooves to check there are no stones caught in them and there are no problems.
- Feet should be trimmed approximately every 6-8 weeks by a qualified farrier. (Found on the Farriers Registration Council)
- Register with a veterinary practice ensuring that your horse has all relevant vaccinations, dental examinations, a worming programme and preventative healthcare requirements taken care of.



Insurance

When purchasing a horse, you must ensure that you have appropriate insurance in place. Accidents happen and we can't prevent the unexpected happening, so insurance is important to protect ourselves.

Anyone who owns, rides or looks after a horse is strongly advised to carry **public liability insurance** cover, because they may be legally liable to pay compensation for any damage or injury caused by their horse. This can be purchased through the British Horse Society.

It is also strongly recommended that you take out an **equine insurance policy** to cover any accidents or illness your horse may experience, resulting in large veterinary bills.

If you are a first time buyer, it's well worth taking the time to fully research and assess the impact that owning a horse will have on your daily life through time and finances, prioritizing the wellbeing of both you and your horse.