

As a horse owner it is important to ensure regular health checks and also establish an understanding of what is normal for your horse on a daily basis to help you recognise when they are unwell. From doing this, you will begin to recognise earlier, your horse displaying any unusual behaviours or traits.

At the time of your horse's annual booster your vet will give your horse a basic health check. However, as a horse owner it is a good idea for you to perform regular checks to ensure that any signs of disease are identified early. Being pro-active is always better than being reactive. In most cases these routine checks are second nature and often you will perform them subconsciously every time you ride, groom, feed, bring in or turn out your horse.

It's a good idea to check the following on a daily basis:

- Hair (coat) and skin
- Teeth and eating
- Eyes, ears, nose
- Legs
- Urine and faeces
- Appetite and water intake
- Behaviour



If anything appears out of the ordinary then get in touch with your vet who will be happy to offer advice.

Knowing the normal heart rate, respiratory rate and temperature of your horse can be very useful in identifying stress or disease early. Any changes from these normal values could indicate a problem.

## Respiratory rate

At rest a horse's respiratory rate should be between: 8-12 breathes per minute (b.p.m.). Breathing rate is best measured by watching the sideways expansion of the chest while standing outside the stable. The respiratory rate can often be raised when the horse is stressed or sick.



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## Temperature

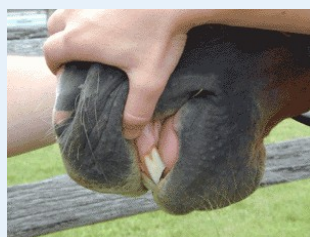
The normal temperature of a horse is: 99.5-101.3°F or 37.5-38.5°C

The temperature is taken by inserting the thermometer into the anus of the horse and holding against the side of the rectum. Do not stand directly behind the horse when taking the temperature.



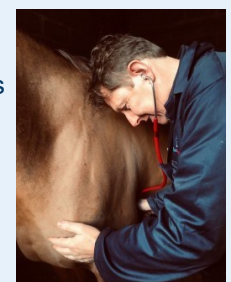
## Checking gums

A healthy horse should have gums (mucosa), which are poached salmon pink. The gums should be moist to the touch, and when pressed lightly with a thumb or forefinger they should go from pink to white and back to pink again in less than 2 seconds.



## Heart Rate

In a full size horse, the heart rate will be around 36-40 beats per minute (bpm). This simply involves placing a stethoscope on the left side of the horse's chest, just behind the elbow, and listening for about 30 seconds, doubling the number to get the number of beats per minute.



**Your vet will check all of these as part of your horses health check and routine health care however, if you can check these yourself on a regular basis, you will be able to identify any potential changes and problems in your horse, allowing early veterinary intervention.**