



New Mexico Horse Council
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Horse Health Care



Develop a relationship with a veterinarian who knows you and your horses.

YOU NEED TO KNOW - If you do not know how, work with your veterinarian to learn:

- How to use a twitch and other restraints
- How to give oral medicine, give an intramuscular injection and an intravenous injection
- How to take a horse's temperature, pulse, respiratory rate, and assess gut sounds (click [here](#) for a quick HOW TO)
- How to bandage properly
- The parts of your horse including the bones

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Pulse rate: 30-45 beats per minute
- Respiratory rate: 8-20 breaths per minute
- Rectal temperature: 99.5-101.5.
- Capillary refill time: 2 seconds

OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

- Skin pliability is tested by pinching or folding a flap of neck skin and releasing. It should immediately snap back into place.
- Color of the mucous membranes, nostrils, conjunctiva (inner eye tissue), and inner lips of vulva should be pink. Bright red, pale pink to white, or bluish-purple coloring may indicate problems.
- Color, consistency, and volume of feces and urine should be typical of that individual's usual excretions. Straining or failure to excrete should be noted.
- Signs of distress, anxiety or discomfort.

- Lethargy, depression or anorexia.
- Presence or absence of gut sounds.
- Evidence of lameness such as head-bobbing, reluctance to move, odd stance, pain, unwillingness to rise.
- Bleeding, swelling, evidence of pain
- Seizures, paralysis or "tying-up":

Consult your veterinarian for your horse's routine and preventive health care.

Vaccinations: All horses should be vaccinated at least once a year, usually in spring. A vaccination program is determined by age, use and overall health of your horse. Time of year influences the risk of infectious diseases. Contact your veterinarian for recommendations.

Internal Parasite Control: Your horse needs to be de-wormed several times each year. The frequency of treatment varies with your horse's management.

Dental Care: Teeth should be checked by a veterinarian at least once a year. The teeth may need to be floated (filed) due to uneven wear from the grinding motion used while eating.

First Aid: Consult your veterinarian about an appropriate first-aid kit to have on hand at all times. Click [here](#) for a suggested list of things to start with. Contact a veterinarian any time your horse appears sick or disoriented, or has been injured.

Foot Care: You need to engage the services of a qualified farrier (horseshoer) to assist you in the proper care and maintenance of your horse's hooves. Hooves should be trimmed regularly. The need for hoof care varies with the use and age of your horse. Consult your farrier for specific recommendations for your horse and your style of riding. Clean out hooves before and after each ride. Examine them regularly for problems.

For additional information, see the Ask The Vet information on the website of the American Association of Equine Practitioners, www.aaep.org/ask_the_vet.php. Monthly columns go back to 2005, and cover a wide variety of topics.