

Red's guide to basic horse care and how to tell if your favourite pony is feeling a little under the weather...



Looking after a pony is lots of fun but can also be difficult if you are not sure what to do when your pony becomes ill. Red hopes his top tips will help you to know if your pony isn't feeling his best.



1. Get to know your pony really well so you

know if he is acting oddly. It can be really hard to tell sometimes when your pony is trying to tell you how he's feeling. The better you know him the easier it will be for you to notice when something is different.

2. Check him over very carefully at least once a

day. Make sure you check his whole body and legs everyday for any cuts and wounds.

3. Know the signs of a horse that is feeling a little poorly. A happy and healthy horse will be alert, have clear eyes, ears pricked and a lovely glossy coat. A poorly horse will look sad and depressed, he might have runny eyes and his ears back with his head hung low and have a dull coat.

4. No foot, no horse! Look after his feet. Make sure you pick your horse's feet at least once a day, preferably twice. This will remove any stones and will help to stop him getting fungal infections in his foot.

5. Keep him clean. You don't want to over-groom your pony but it is important to make sure there is no mud left on him where you are going to put tack or rugs as this could rug and make him sore. Your pony has protective oils in his coat which help to keep him warm and waterproof so if you groom him too much you will take these out.

6. Keep your stable and field clean. Whether your pony lives in a stable, field or both you need to make sure both are kept clean. Muck out his stable at least once a day and poo pick his field twice a week. It is important he has a dry bed to sleep on and it is important to remove droppings from the field as this is how horses get worms.



7. Horses love company. Horses are herd animals and will always graze close to their friends. If your pony is away from the others in his field and not eating, or waiting by the gate this could be a sign that things aren't quite right.



8. Know his vital stats. It's important to know what your horses normal temperature, pulse and respiration rate (TPR) are at rest. Temperature should be around 38 degrees, pulse should be 36 - 42 beats per minute and respiration rate should be 8-15 breaths per minute. If your horse is very hot and sweating or breathing rapidly when he hasn't been doing strenuous exercise something could be wrong. Ask an adult to help you check his TPR and if they are higher than normal ask them to call a vet for advice.



9. Standing tall. Horses stand for about 20 hours a day so they need to be comfortable. When stood up your horse should have his weight evenly in each hoof! If he's resting a back leg this is ok but if he's resting a front leg or standing back on his heels this could be a sign that he's in pain and might be suffering from Laminitis. If you are unsure then ask an adult to call your local equine vet for some advice.

10. Look beyond the surface.

Obvious problems such as cuts and wounds are easy to spot but sometimes the symptoms are subtler. If your horse is looking at his tummy a lot or constantly rolling it could be because he's got a bad tummy ache known as 'colic.' If you think your horse has colic, ask an adult to have a look at him and call the vet immediately. Vets will always respond to colic as an emergency.

Above all don't panic!

We know it can be very worrying if you suspect your horse has fallen ill. Ask an experienced adult to take a look for you and contact your local equine vet for some advice. If you would like some more advice on caring for horses, or to request a set of Redwings Horse Care and Welfare leaflets ask an adult to give our Welfare team a call on 01508 481008 or drop us an e-mail at young@redwings.co.uk.

