

**15**  
YEARS  
2005 / 2020

#104

# Technical Dossier

Innovation and knowledge transfer

May 2020



## Sport, leisure, and companion horses care and handling guidelines

Generalitat de Catalunya  
Departament d'Agricultura,  
Ramaderia, Pesca i Alimentació



**Rural  
Cat**



Page 02 Introduction Page 03 Equine wellbeing guide. Handling and feeding Page 07 Horse health assessment. Owner actions to ensure proper health Page 12 Equine farm registry and horse identification Page 18 Management of veterinary treatments in sport, leisure, and companion horse facilities Page 22 The present and future of facilities hosting sport, leisure and companion horses Page 26 New trends in hoof management Page 29 A conversations with: Marta Camprubí



### Quim Xifra Triadú

Deputy Managing Director of Livestock

## Sport, leisure and company horses represent the majority of the equine population in Catalonia.

The purpose of this *Technical Dossier* is to provide guidance for the proper care and management of sport, leisure and companion horses. These horses represent the majority of the equine population in Catalonia, making it essential to create this *Dossier* to offer guidance to both industry professionals and individual horse owners.

We have included administrative aspects of equine ownership, such as registration and instructions for the management of veterinary treatments. Additionally, we have provided health and management recommendations, as well as innovations related to the sector.

Requirements for equine registration and identification are governed by regional and national livestock regulations and European regulations on identification. An article has been included to analyse this legislation and outline the obligations of equine facilities and horse owners in a simplified manner.

Another area of interest for the equine sector is the management of veterinary drug records. Therefore, an article has been included that provides detailed information on obtaining and administering

medications and recording their use, especially considering the specific requirements for horses if they are intended for human consumption. We believe this is crucial to ensure the proper use of medications and food safety for horse meat.

Handling, feeding and assessing the health of horses are crucial topics to understand to ensure their well-being. We have collaborated with two veterinarians who specialise in equine clinical care to provide two articles: one on handling and feeding recommendations, and the other on how horse owners can assess if their horse has a health issue and needs to contact their clinical veterinarian.

Finally, we wanted to include innovative aspects in the equine sector in the coming years. Firstly, those related to housing and animal welfare, where individual stalls are increasingly being replaced by systems involving fencing, exercise walkers, paddocks, or semi-free range horses. In connection with this, we feature an interview with the owner of a riding centre that works with free-range horses. Secondly, we address hoof management. In recent years, the trend of leaving horses unshod has been gaining popularity, as most owners and many caretakers believe that many ailments and injuries result from our limited knowledge of proper care for these great animals. This article addresses this problem and the alternatives to horse-shoes, such as the use of hoof boots, and also presents the experience in their use in the Escola Agrària del Pirineu (Agricultural School of the Pyrenees) in Bellestar.

Finally, we must thank all the professionals who took part in writing this *Dossier* for their collaboration. We are grateful to them for identifying the topics of interest for the leisure and sport equine sectors and for contributing their knowledge. I am convinced that, because of the topics discussed, this *dossier* will be a useful tool that provides answers and clarifications to horse owners, and also bring new trends to their attention.

### Technical Dossier. No. 104

Sport, leisure and companion horses care and handling guidelines.  
May 2020.

### Publisher

General Directorate of Food, Quality and Food Industries.

### Editing Board

Carmel Mòdol Bresolí, Jaume Sió Torres, Joan Gòdia Tresàncez, Maria Glòria Cugat Pujol, Neus Ferrete Gracia, Joaquim Xifra Triadú, Enric Vadell Guiral, Jordi Ruiz Olmo, Rosario Allué Puyuelo, Laura Dalmau Pol, Valentí Marco Sanz, Antoni Enjuanes Puyol, Joan Barniol Garriga, Isaac Salvatierra Pujol, Maria Josep de Ribot Porta, Joan S. Minguet Pla, Mireia Medina Sala, Rosa Cubel Muñoz.

### Coordination and Production

Maria Josep de Ribot Porta, Imma Malet Prat, Annabel Teixidó Martínez and Rosada Gili Cabanillas.

### Language Correction and Linguistic Guidance

Joan Ignasi Elias Cruz and Lluís Piqueres Pla.

### Graphic Design and Layout

Carlos Guzman Lorente.

### Printing

Romanyà Valls, S.A.

### Legal Deposit

B-16786-05.  
ISSN: 1699-5465.

The content of the articles is the responsibility of the authors. DOSSIER TÈCNIC does not necessarily endorse them. Full or partial reproduction of the articles is authorised with proper attribution of the source and authorship.

### Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food.

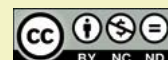
Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes,  
612-614. 08007 - Barcelona

### For more resources, links and electronic versions, please visit:

<https://ruralcat.gencat.cat>  
<http://agricultura.gencat.cat/>  
e-mail: [sia.daam@gencat.cat](mailto:sia.daam@gencat.cat)

### Cover:

Design by: Carlos Guzman Lorente.



# HORSE WELLBEING GUIDE

## Handling and feeding

### 01. Introduction: The obligation to care for them!

Regardless of their use, all horses have the same needs to ensure their well-being. However, the way to meet those needs may vary depending on the type of relationship one has with them.

Horse owners may have one or more horses for:

- Leisure riding,
- Riding lessons,
- Sports activities (jumping, dressage, endurance riding, horseball, reining, among others),
- Breeding and conformation competitions,
- Equine therapy,
- Enjoying their company and socialising with them.

Professionals and users in the world of horses are responsible for the horses' health and well-being and must ensure:

- Proper nutrition,
- Shelter,
- Adequate socialisation and normal behavioural patterns,
- Good hygiene and sanitary conditions,
- Responsible breeding,
- Safe transfer and transportation.

### 02. Nutrition

Proper nutrition is essential for horses to maintain a healthy physical condition, have the energy required for their physical activities and meet physiological demands (e.g. growth, gestation, lactation, body temperature regulation)

Regardless of how they are used, all horses need the same things to ensure their well-being.



Photo: S. de Freitas.

Appropriate food is essential for horses to maintain a good body condition, have energy for their physical activities, and meet their physiological and metabolic demands.

and particular metabolic demands, such as for certain medical conditions. Horses are herbivorous animals with a digestive anatomy adapted for feeding on grass (a low-energy food source), in small amounts per hour, typically for 18-20 hours a day.

### What do horses eat?

#### Fodder/Grass

This is the main ingredient in any healthy horse diet.

The fodder must be of good quality and green, which can include pasture, grass hay, alfalfa hay (the last of these must not exceed 30% of the total fodder given).

Mid-bloom oat hay is another commonly used fodder, but it should not account for more than 50% of the total.

It is best to avoid using straw as a source of nutrition. Amount: minimum 1.5% of the animal's body weight per day (a 500 kg horse, would be given 7.5 kg of fodder).

The best way to provide fodder that mimics their natural feeding behaviour (small, frequent meals), is to have access to grass hay *ad libitum*. Nowadays, there are *slow feeder* supply systems to increase chewing time.

#### Animal feeds

In the past, horse diets typically consisted of grain mixtures (mainly oats, corn and barley), following unscientific formulas and without taking nutritional needs into consideration. Today, there are commercial horse feed manufacturers who produce compound feeds containin and other supplementary in-

gredients (like soy, flaxseed, etc.) along with vitamin and mineral supplements. This allows for a wide selection of specific feeds based on factors such as age, physiological state, type of medical condition and physical activity. Free-range horses with low physical activity and in normal climatic conditions may not need to add animal feed to their fodder diet, but do require vitamins (namely A and E) and mineral supplements that are not found in sufficient quantities in their fodder.

The daily amount of animal feed must be tailored to the animal's weight and physical activity level, but should not exceed 40% of their total diet (typically 2-4 kg per day).

---

The daily amount of animal feed should be in accordance with the animal's weight and physical activity level.

---

Any changes in the amount or type of feed should be gradual.

---

Dietary needs will depend on age, weight, level of exercise and temperament.

---

The more physical activity the horse engages in, the more energy it needs, which may necessitate more feed. Higher or lower amounts can result in obese or underfed horses.

The daily feed should be divided into as many meals as possible, with 2 or 3 meals a day being the most common practice.

#### Wheat bran

This provides highly digestible fibre, but also comes with a high starch content.

It should not be permanently mixed with animal feed since it can lead to dietary imbalance due to excess phosphorus.

#### Beet pulp

This is a very healthy and digestible source of fibre, which promotes intestinal transit. It is especially important for senior horses with dental issues that consume less fodder.

#### Carrots and apples

These fresh, succulent foods are highly palatable and can be used as treats.

Horses should have access to fresh,

clean water at all times. Ideally, automatic waterers should be used, but large buckets that can be cleaned daily are also suitable. A horse consumes between 25 to 35 litres of water per day, although this can increase to 50 litres a day in hot and humid conditions.

#### How?

Changes in the quantity or type of food should be gradual. The flora in the large intestine is specific to digest the food the horse receives. Abrupt dietary changes lead to a lack of adap-



Photos: S. de Freitas.

Granulated feed and wheat bran. Photo: S. de Freitas

**Very important!**

A trusted veterinarian must be consulted to establish an individualised diet for the animal. Dietary needs will depend on age, weight, level of exercise and temperament. Any change in appetite or weight loss may be due to illness.

tation of the flora, resulting in digestive issues that may lead to severe digestive (colic) and/or metabolic (laminitis) disorders. Maintain a routine. Horses are creatures of habit, and changes in their schedule can lead to stress and the development of stall vices and digestive issues.

Do not exercise horses until at least 2 hours after feeding. Even though 70% of food has already left the stomach within 30 minutes of ingestion, a full stomach puts pressure on the lungs. Additionally, exercise increases the body's vascular demand, which can disrupt digestion.

### 03. Shelter and stabling

Horses should be protected from adverse weather conditions. Horses gradually adapt to changing seasons, shedding their coat in the summer and growing it thicker in the winter, which, along with body fat, provides protection against the cold. However, horses should also be sheltered from the wind, sun and rain, which can be achieved with natural shelter such as trees or bushes or purpose-built sheds. Some horses may require stabling in stalls, particularly in cases of injury or illness.

The choice of stabling type depends on many factors, including the horse's use and temperament, socialisation needs, physiological condition and financial considerations, among others.

### 04. Socialisation

Horses need to live with one another for proper emotional development. They are herd animals and need olfactory, visual and physical contact with other horses, although they also enjoy contact with humans.

It is crucial that they can smell each other, make contact and see each other. However, paddocks should not be shared with horses that create conflicts

amongst themselves. Exercising dominance behaviours over another, weaker horse causes ongoing stress for both animals, which in turn can lead to behavioural problems and digestive disorders.

In sufficiently wide fields, horses will form groups with individuals that are compatible, and they keep their distance from the horses who are not. This reduces the likelihood of serious conflicts. Incompatible animals should always be separated.

It is very important to remember that a horse normally kept in a stable needs time to gradually adapt to sharing

---

The choice of stabling type depends on many factors, including the horse's use and temperament, socialisation needs, physiological condition and financial considerations, among others.

---

Horses need to live with one another for proper emotional development.

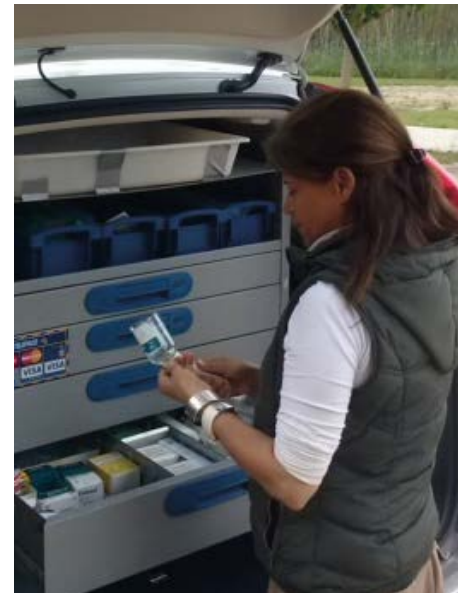
---



Photos: S. de Freitas.



Photos: S. de Freitas.



space with other horses or to move to a paddock.

Horses are not used to having to protect or share their food or living space.

### 05. Good hygiene and health conditions

Every horse should have a veterinarian who:

- establishes its diet and monitors its body condition and health,
- implants a microchip and processes its passport within the first year of life,
- provides preventive care (vaccination, deworming, dental check-ups, guidelines for proper athletic performance),

---

A horse that is weak or ill cannot be relocated anywhere except a veterinary hospital.

---

A foal, like any other animal, requires a lot of dedication and financial effort.

---

- assists and treats the horse in the event of illness or injury, ensuring proper pharmacovigilance,
- advises, monitors and certifies hygiene, health, welfare and breeding conditions, and
- practices humane euthanasia for any animal that is suffering inevitably.

Every horse should have a podiatrist who sees to the horse's hooves and leg alignment.

### 06. Responsible breeding

Breedings should be carried out on specialised farms, with a controlled health plan and in accordance with market demand. A foal, like any other animal, requires a lot of dedication and financial effort.

A foal should never be a whim. A foal bred on a whim ends up increasing the number of horses that need of people willing to care for them.

The facilities must meet the necessary conditions to guarantee the safety of the veterinarian, staff and animals. A foal cannot grow without space.

Breeding a mare from your property requires proper advance planning, guided by the veterinarian, to ensure the

well-being of the pregnant mare and later that of the growing foal.

### 07. Transport and relocation

A horse that is weak or ill cannot be relocated anywhere except a veterinary hospital.

Long journeys require rest stops for water and food supply.

Driving should be careful and respectful of the animal.

The responsibility for ensuring the health and well-being of the horses during transport falls on: the owner, the veterinarian (who certifies the horses' health status and good hygienic and sanitary conditions), transporter and caretaker (who guarantees the horses' well-being during stops, feeding and hydration).

### Author



---

#### Sofia de Freitas González

Veterinarian.  
EGUISOF Equine Veterinary Hospital.

Member of the AVEEC Equine Welfare Commission.  
sofiafreitas@eguisof.com

# HEALTH ASSESSMENT OF HORSES

## Actions by owners to ensure proper health

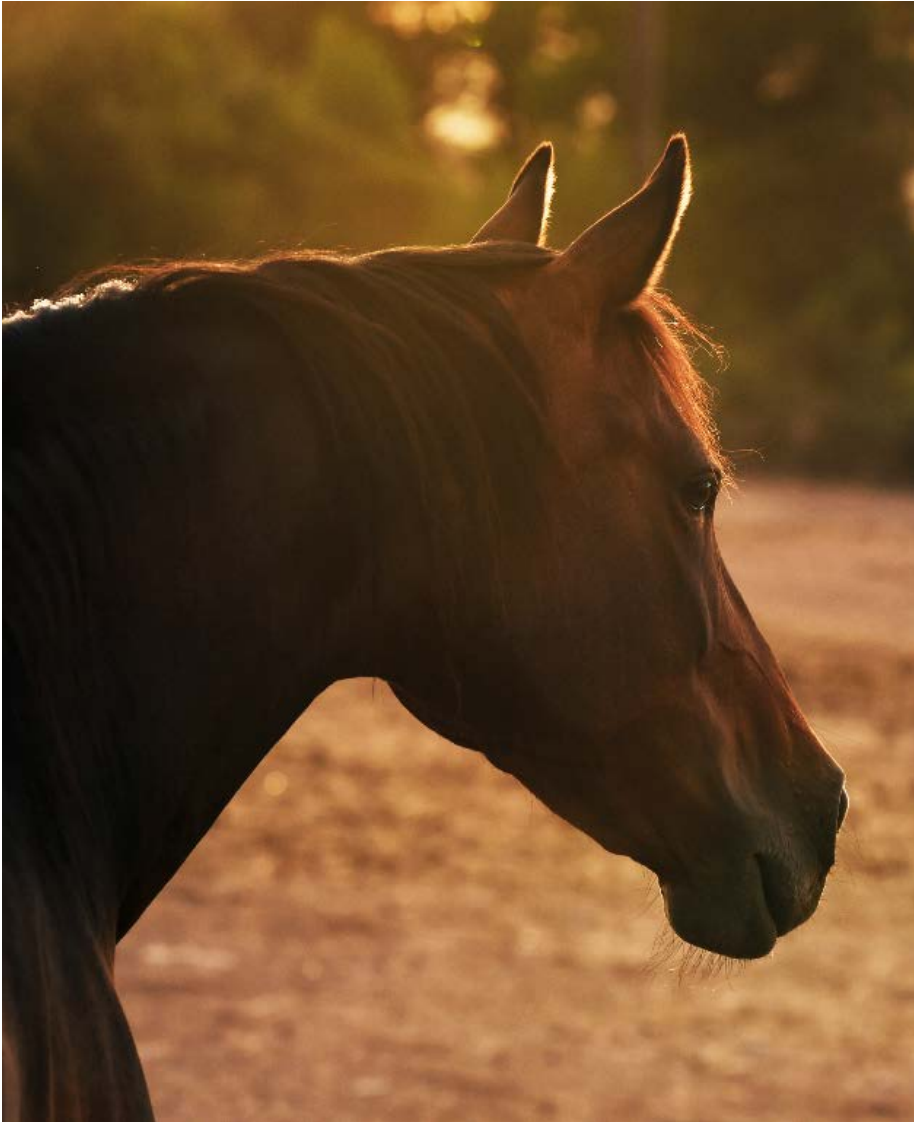


Photo from the Asociación de Defensa de los Équidos calendar. Photo: Irene Bel.

### 01. Introduction

Owning and caring for a horse, apart from being a rewarding experience in many ways, comes with a series of moral and ethical obligations as a responsible animal owner. As such, we must ensure an appropriate environment and proper nutrition, ensure they do not experience pain or disease, and provide them with the appropriate

environment for them to express normal equine behaviours.

Horse owners are the primary stakeholders in ensuring adequate levels of health and well-being for their animal.

A horse's well-being depends as much on its physical condition as it does on the animal's emotional and physiological condition. There are many ways to

A horse's well-being depends as much on its physical condition as it does on the animal's emotional and physiological condition.

quickly and reliably determine if a horse is healthy and in good condition, without the need of diagnostic tests.

### 02. Accommodation and surroundings

Adequate accommodation is one that protects the animals from weather conditions while allowing them to interact with each other. As social animals, horses in the wild live in groups, but in daily practice and/or due to other reasons, it is difficult or impractical to provide space for maintaining a herd of horses and so horses are stabled individually. Individual stabling should allow for social interaction, for the animal to move, turn around and lie down, and should also have clean and dry bedding material (straw, shavings or similar). Keeping a horse alone and/or isolated from other horses is discouraged, as isolation is a source of stress.

In general, excessive confinement and restrictions on socialisation lead to frustration, which can promote undesirable and stereotyped behaviours, also known as 'vices', which are repetitive behaviours with no apparent function. Some common stereotypic behaviours are: 'weaving', 'cribbing' and 'wind-sucking', as well as kicks and self-mu-

---

In general, excessive confinement and restrictions on socialisation lead to frustration, which can cause undesirable and stereotyped behaviours.

---

A saddle that does not fit the back well is the main cause of back pain in horses.

---

tilation, among others. When a stereotypy is detected, it is advisable to make changes so that the behaviour does not become ingrained. This can involve allowing the horse to spend some time in an outdoor enclosure for a few hours, bring it out more often, facilitate more interaction with neighbouring animals, introduce another animal - preferably another horse, although sometimes a non-equid (a small ruminant, for example) can greatly improve the situation.

### 03. General appearance

#### 03.01 Expression and posture of the horse

The general appearance of an animal is an immediate source of information that is often underestimated. At first glance and in a matter of seconds, we can spot alterations and/or pathologies such as wounds, edema, inflammation, or allergic reactions.

#### 03.02. Coat

A horse's coat is an excellent indicator of the health of an equine. Except for certain breeds and specific times of the year when they shed their coat (resulting in a less glossy appearance), a horse's coat should be short and shiny. It should not show bald patches or wounds. Some endocrine disorders, malnutrition, or old age can lead to delays in shedding the coat - or even inhibit it.

Aside from providing an idea of the horse's general condition, paying attention to the condition of the coat can help detect specific or seasonal aller-

gic reactions, among others issues.

Improper adjustment of tack and saddles can also lead to bald areas and injuries. Prior to hair loss, however, where there is excessive pressure, the hairs break and look unsightly (typically in the saddle area). Thus, if the pressure is not well distributed and is concentrated at specific points, we may find: broken hairs, bald patches, wounds and even white hairs. A saddle that does not properly fit on the horse's back is the main cause of back pain in horses.

Including in this section the mane and tail, in horses with allergies it is typical to find manes with knots, areas with broken hair hairless patches, evidence of itching, and the presence of broken hairs at the base of the tail, sometimes accompanied by lesions to adjacent areas due to the horses rubbing against walls, trunks, fences, feeders, etc. because of the itching caused by allergies. The tail, the mane and the base of the forelock, as well as moist areas, are the preferred places for ticks that can transmit piroplasmiasis and babesiosis to horses. These are small parasites



Group of horses. Photo: Rosada Gili.



Short shiny hair. Photo: Lali Masriera.



that cause anaemia, fever and apathy among other symptoms.

### 30.03 Body condition

Assessing body condition is a very quick and useful tool to determine whether a horse is thin, at an ideal weight or overweight. It involves visually inspecting the horse while simultaneously performing a superficial palpation to determine the presence of fat accumulations.

In horses that are too thin, their bones (ribs, vertebrae and hips) are clearly visible and can be palpated. In horses with an ideal body condition, their bones are not visible, but they can be easily felt and there is some fat accumulation. In overweight horses, their bones are not visible and obvious fat accumulations can be felt (at the base of the tail, on the back, on the ribs, behind the shoulders and on the neck). Obesity predisposes horses to metabolic disorders, overloads the limbs and can lead to conditions such as laminitis. It is advisable not to neglect body condition and periodically adjust exercise and feeding regimes to the needs of each individual to prevent overweight issues.



Detail of hoof and horseshoe. Photo: Xesco Farrier.

## 04. Limbs

Limbs are especially important and delicate in horses. It is advisable to seek the assistance of a professional whenever lameness is detected to identify its origin and determine the most appropriate treatment.

### 04.01 Hooves

Another aspect to check often are the hooves, both of shod and unshod horses. Assess the hoof growth, signs of wear and tear, the presence of cracks, visibility of growth lines, and any loose horseshoes. Hooves should be cleaned periodically to prevent pathologies caused by excessive moisture, the presence of foreign objects or infections of the grooves of the frog, among others things. Hooves that are too long and/or have incorrect angles can alter the biomechanics of movement and damage certain joint structures such as ligaments and tendons, ultimately causing lameness.

Farriers, along with veterinarians, must work together and establish clear lines of communication to ensure the horse's utmost well-being. As a general guideline, it is recommended to have a farrier visit every 4-6 weeks, both for shod and unshod horses, and it is not recommended to let more than 8 weeks pass between visits. As a general rule, a hoof grows approximately 1 cm per month, but this can vary according to age, breed, time of year (with summers usually seeing faster growth) and food, among others factors. The recommendations of both the farrier and the veterinarian should be followed regarding hoof hydration. While cleaning the hooves, you can also take the opportunity to inspect the overall condition of the limbs, checking for fluid accumulation or inflammation, excessive warmth, if there are cracked heels (also known as 'mud fever' and 'pastern dermatitis') or the presence of *Gasterophilus* eggs on the cannon bones.

It is recommended not to overlook body condition and to periodically adjust the exercise regimen and food portions to the needs of each individual, to avoid reaching unhealthy weights.

A visit to a professional is recommended whenever a limp is detected so that its origin and the most appropriate treatment can be established.

The unique characteristics of horses' mouths mean that they require regular visits from professional equine dentists.

## 05. Head and face

Alterations or problems in the head area are particularly easy to spot. Episodes of nasal discharge, which often accompany colds and flu, should be discussed with a veterinarian, who will decide whether or not treatment should be undertaken. As a general rule, when such discharges are through both nostrils, they tend to have their origin in the respiratory tract (upper or lower). Nasal discharges from one side are more related to oral/dental or nasal issues.

During the summer months, mosquitoes can settle in our horse's ears. Although not serious infestations, it is a very irritating phenomenon that can cause changes in the horse's behaviour, such as sudden headshaking.

The mouth and lips, which are particularly sensitive, should present a normal appearance, without marks or wounds.

The unique characteristics of horses' mouths mean that they require regular visits from professional equine dentists. In addition to addressing sharp points that can cause significant injuries to the tongue and oral mucosa and chewing problems, the bridle and bit, other things that must be corrected are imbalances of the biting surface of molars, overgrowths of the incisors, extraction of wolf teeth, gaps between teeth, retention of deciduous teeth, and other issues that only a professional is able to detect and correct.

## 06. Vaccinations and deworming

There are no mandatory vaccinations for horses. However, the Royal Spanish Equestrian Federation (RFHE, by its Spanish initials) regulations establish that horses must have an up-to-date flu vaccine (equine influenza) to participate in equine competitions and/or gatherings. Equine influenza is an endemic disease in our country. It is caused by a virus from the human influenza family that mainly presents as a respiratory condition accompanied by fever and weakness. The flu vaccine is usually administered with the tetanus vaccine. The tetanus shot is not mandatory either, but it is recommended as horses are particularly sensitive to the tetanus toxin.

The rhinopneumonitis vaccination is recommended for pregnant mares, as that virus can cause abortions. Vaccinations should always be administered by a professional veterinarian, who will be responsible for determining the most suitable vaccination schedule for the animal, as well as ensuring the correct administration.

Horses should also regularly be dewormed internally. Nowadays, anthelmintic treatments are on the market in the form of an 'oral syringe' that the owner can administer. Deworming is recommended every 3-6 months. However, it is always preferable to consult with a veterinarian and not administer the same product every time, since dif-

ferent brands (and prices) incorporate different active ingredients that have different effectiveness according to the type of parasites. In horses that are not dewormed, intestinal worm obstructions have been described, which have led to the need for surgical intervention.

Regarding external parasite prevention, it is important to prevent ticks and there are products available to achieve this. During seasons of higher temperatures, flies, mosquitoes, forest and horseflies and many more creatures may appear that are more irritating than dangerous (except for horses with an allergy or hypersensitivity to *Culicoides* and other specific cases).

## 07. Bowel movements and urination

It is interesting to have a look at horse faeces. Considering that they defecate an average of 8 times a day, horse faeces can provide information that is more valuable than it would seem at first glance. Examining the consistency (ideally, they should appear as clearly formed "pellets" rather than diarrhoea), the presence of worms or intestinal parasitic eggs (worms are easier to spot), the presence of whole grains (indicating that the horse is not chew-

ing correctly) are very easy aspects to assess. The material that we will find in the faeces, therefore, is material that is not used. A more liquid consistency than normal can be indicative of a gastrointestinal problem, evidence of poor quality food (which draws more water as it passes through the colon) or a diet high in carbohydrates.

Urine can be more difficult to assess, as it must be collected 'in the act'. There are horses that urinate with the rider on top, but there are many that 'wait to get home' to do so. Urine should be between yellow and transparent (depending on the amount of water the horse drinks, how much it sweats, etc.). Dark urine can be a symptom of metabolic issues, and we should consult the veterinarian.

## 08. Physical activity

Horses are naturally designed to move frequently and it is recommended that they are let out regularly. Depending on the discipline and use of the horse, each owner will follow their physical activity guidelines depending on the purpose and expected results. Whatever those guidelines may be, it is recommended to follow some general guidelines apart from specific training:



Show-jumping competition. Photo: Lali Masriera.

- **Stretching and Flexibility:** Preparing joints for physical activity. Especially recommended for animals that are stabled in boxes or stalls. There are many stretches that can be done unmounted and which, when performed correctly, can be very beneficial for the animal. Generally, there are both static and dynamic stretching exercises.
- **Warm-up/Pre-warm up:** It is recommended to start at a walk and gradually increase the pace. As the muscles begin to work, their aerobic metabolism and oxygen demands increase. The heart rate increases to ensure that the muscles receive sufficient blood supply. The duration of the warm-up can vary greatly.
- **Discipline-Specific Training:** This phase involves the highest level of effort. Its duration may vary according to discipline, age, expected performance and other factors. During this stage, the muscles may begin to undergo anaerobic metabolism, since the rate of oxygen entering the cells does not cover demand. In general, a well-trained horse will have better tolerance for anaerobic metabolism.
- **Cool-Down:** After the intense training phase, it's advisable to gradually reduce pace, allowing the heart rate and the breathing rate to decrease. This dissipates the heat generated

by the activity and redistributes blood circulation. It is no longer necessary to allocate so much oxygen to the muscles. With the decrease in exercise and muscle metabolism, the need for anaerobic metabolism dissipates. Stretching exercises, both mounted and unmounted, can also be incorporated during this phase.

For both physical disciplines (such as endurance riding or eventing) and technical ones (dressage or show-jumping), it is recommended, whenever possible, to combine the training sessions with outings or leisurely rides.

The recommendations described above are very general guidelines. To delve deeper into this subject, you can consult professionals such as equine veterinarians or physiotherapists.

## 09. Conclusions

As described in the previous paragraphs, horse owners and caretakers can gather a lot of information about the general condition of the horse through simple observation. It is important to establish a routine to examine the animal, as early detection leads to a lower risk of complications. Always consult a veterinarian whenever necessary.

Horses are naturally designed to move frequently and it is recommended that they are let out regularly.

It is important to establish a routine to examine the animal, as early detection leads to a lower risk of complications.

In Catalonia, there are many veterinarians who specialise in horses and who can be consulted in the event for any doubts or concerns.

To learn more

STUBBS, NC and CLAYTON, HM. (2008) 'Activate Your Horse's Core: Unmounted Exercises for Dynamic Mobility, Strength and Balance.' Sporthorse Publications.

LOVING, NANCY S. (2016) "Todos los sistemas del caballo." (ed.) Hispano Europea. Barcelona

AWIN, 2015. AWIN welfare assessment protocol for horses. [http://dx.doi.org/10.13130/AWIN\\_HORSES\\_2015](http://dx.doi.org/10.13130/AWIN_HORSES_2015)  
<https://horses.extension.org/assessing-the-health-and-well-being-of-horses/>

Website: The ultimate Equestrian  
<https://theultimteequestrian.com/basic-horse-care-for-beginners/>

Author



**Maria de Andrés Arnau**

Veterinarian.  
Servei d'Ordenació Ramadera (Livestock Management Service).

Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food.  
[mandres.arnau@gencat.cat](mailto:mandres.arnau@gencat.cat)



Cool-down after training. Photo: Maria de Andrés.

# EQUINE FARM REGISTRY and equine identification

## 01. Introduction

The equine sector is one of the oldest in history, but it presents some particular characteristics that call for a specific and differentiated analysis compared to other livestock sectors.

We are dealing with a domesticated species that has undergone several changes in the last hundred years. At the beginning of the last century, the functional versatility of the horse was most outstanding: it ranged from agricultural work, animal traction, saddlery and military use. Subsequently, as a result of mechanisation, the number of horses decreased considerably, at the same time that the interests of the sector regarding the selection of this species also changed in accordance with the new uses and functionalities of these animals.

At the end of the 20th century, the sector began a progressive increase in demand, motivated mainly by the presence of these animals in recreational, cultural and sporting activities, which resulted in an increase in the number of horses. Numbers increased with respect to horses who were kept according to regulations and, unfortunately, with respect to those who were not, either because they were not registered in the official databases or because they were located in unregistered farms.

## 02. Regulation of the equine sector

It is interesting to analyse a sector with enormous potential and multifunctionality, which is not only limited to the

livestock sector, but extends to others such as sport, tourism, education and the environment, to name but a few.

Like any other productive sector, sectoral order and organisation lie in the registration of farms, the proper management of the individual identification of animals and the registration of livestock movements.

However, it is important to emphasize that equine farms do not have to follow the management standards that are used for other productive species, since the vast majority of farms are special - that is to say, they are not oriented toward producing food or products intended for human consumption. Such farms are also those

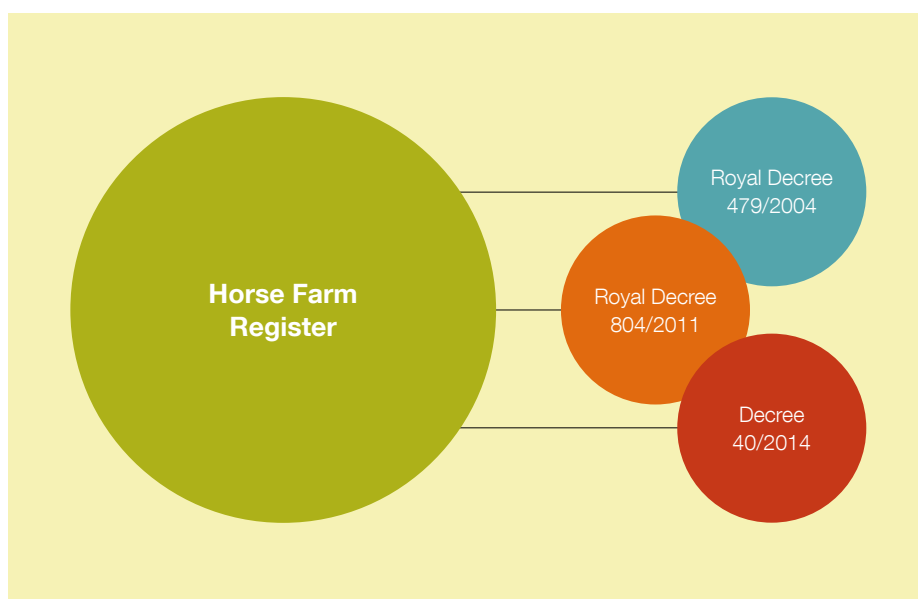
The equine sector has enormous potential and multifunctionality, which is not limited to the livestock sector, but extends to other areas such as sport, tourism, education and the environment.

with the greatest added value (competition, studs, or company).

The regulations for the order and organisation of livestock farms establish the minimum conditions that all farms



Figure 1. Changes in the number of horses over time. Source: Aleix Baltà.



**Figure 2.** National and regional legislation that regulates the Register of Equine Farms. Source: Aleix Baltà.

must meet with the aim of improving production and the quality of production processes through zootechnical, healthcare, hygiene and animal welfare standards, and the protection and improvement of the environment.

In Spain, the sector is regulated by Royal Decree 479/2004, of 26 March, which establishes and regulates the General Register of Livestock Farms (REGA, by its Spanish initials), and Royal Decree 804/2011, of 10 June, which regulates the animal management, sanitary and animal welfare arrangements of equine farms and establishes the Equine Health Plan.

In Catalonia, Decree 40/2014, of 25 March, on the organisation of livestock farms, establishes the requirements to be able to register and authorise a livestock farm in Catalonia. Annex 7 of that decree deals specifically with horse farms.

### 03. Horse farms

When we talk about horse farms, we need to make a distinction between 'normal' horse farms -in which the maximum capacity of animals present on the farm is determined by factors such as space, resources or animal

welfare, among others- and farms known as 'small capacity', a designation for farms that house a small number of animals.

Regarding the management system, two types must be distinguished: on the one hand, there are extensive equine farms, in which the animals are not housed or fed in facilities; and, on the other hand, there are permanent stabling horse farms, most commonly called 'intensive'.

With regard to the ownership of the animals present, it is also possible to differentiate between farms in which the owner of the farm is the same as the owner of the animals, as is the case in most production and reproduction farms, and those that host horses with various owners, as is the case with equestrian centres.

Finally, we can divide equine farms into two large groups based on their zootechnical classification, which at the same time include several types, which are:

Production and reproduction equine farms:

- Equine breeding farms for meat production,

The sectoral arrangement and organisation lies in the registration of farms, the proper management of the individual identification of animals and the registration of livestock movements.

- Equine breeding farms for milk production,
- Equine breeding farms for saddlery,
- Mixed-breeding equine farms
- Livestock farms for fattening horses.

Special equine farms:

- Horse grouping centres (horse depots or stud stalls, groupings of contest or competition horses, groupings of recreational or cultural horses),
- Leisure horse farms,
- Establishments for equestrian practice,
- School farms or educational centres,
- Farms of dealers or commercial operators, and
- Other special equine farms: slaughterhouses, bullrings, inspection centres, stopping points and pastures.

We make a distinction between two large groups of equine farms: special farms and farms for production and reproduction.

### 04. Equine farm register

Prerequisites for registration:

To register an equine farm in Catalonia, the entity must meet a series of prerequisites for registration in the Register of Livestock Farms.

## 01. Prerequisites

### Authorisation by the town council

- Environmental authorisation (livestock waste plan)
- Distance report drawn up by the DARP (urban planning procedure)
- Request to start the activity and inclusion in the Register of Livestock Farms

First of all, it is an essential requirement that the establishment have authorisation from the town council of the municipality where the operation will be located.

Also, the farm must have the relevant environmental authorisations, which will depend directly on the livestock waste plan submitted by the requester. That plan shall detail the volume and management of the waste produced on the farm.

Finally, as part of the urban planning procedure that the city council must follow in order to authorise the installation of a livestock farm, the city council requests a distance report from the Department of Agricul-

It is an essential requirement that the establishment has authorisation from the town council of the municipality where the operation will be located.

ture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (DARP, by its Catalan initials), which addresses the distances of the new farm from other epidemiologically related livestock farms.

Regarding distance reports, it should be kept in mind that small-capacity equine farms (farms that do not exceed a certain number of animals), or those with less than 5 horses (in accordance with Law 20/2009), are outside the scope of environmental procedures, and so a distance report will not be required. In these cases, the city council is informed, for the appropriate purposes.

It should be noted that, without the prior authorisation of the city council of the municipality where the operation will be located and the rest of the requirements mentioned above, DARP does not process the registration of a livestock farm.

### Procedures in the registration of an equine farm:

## 02. Procedures

Farms subject to the **authorisation** procedure

Farms subject to the **communication** procedure

### Documentation:

- Application for inclusion in the Register of Farms
- Descriptive report
- Facilities plan\*
- Accreditation of ownership of the farm

\* Only in authorisation proceeding

Once the pre-registration requirements have been met, and prior to starting livestock activity, farms that

have facilities in Catalonia must request permission to start activity, as well as inclusion in the DARP Register of Livestock Farms.

The request or communication must be made using a standardised form. That form can be downloaded from the electronic office of the Generalitat de Catalunya (<http://www.gencat.cat>) or obtained from any branch of the competent department in livestock matters, or of the Xarxa d'Oficines de Gestió Empresarial (Network of Business Management Offices).

We distinguish between two types of procedure for requesting inclusion or modification in the registration data of a livestock farm.

On the one hand, the start of livestock activity and the following modifications are subject to the authorisation procedure:

- Start of production or reproduction operations (including centres for collecting genetic material) and special horse farms.
- Any modification of the registration data of small capacity farms that would lead to losing this condition
- Any modifications not defined as modifications subjecte to the communication procedure.

Along with the request for authorisation, a descriptive report of the activities that will be carried out by the farm must also be submitted (according to the standardised form that can be found on the website <http://www.gencat.cat>), the distribution plan of the facilities, the accreditation of the ownership of the livestock farm, the environmental licence, the mandatory hygiene programme and, finally, the document certifying the characteristics of the storage systems of the livestock excrement.

On the other hand, the start of livestock activity and the following modi-

fications are subject to the communication procedure:

- Start of activity of self-consumption or small-capacity farms, pastures and genetic material storage centres.
- Any modifications not defined as modifications subject to authorisation.

It should be mentioned that self-consumption farms are those in which the production is used to meet the needs of the owner of the farm. However, the concept of self-consumption is not defined for horses, given that this concept is closely related to the use of some animal product (such as, in other species, meat, milk, eggs, wool, etc.), which does not fit the type of activity done on a small horse farm.

In accordance with what was mentioned above, for the purposes of Decree 40/2014, small capacity farms are those that do not exceed certain livestock units (LSU), so that:

**03. Clarifications**

**The concept of self-consumption for horses is not defined**

**Small-capacity equine farms:**

- Less than 10 LSU, (12 horses intended for meat or milk production or 29 horses intended for fattening)
- Less than 5 LSU, (6 horses for the rest of special farms, intended for saddle or leisure farms)

- We will consider an equine farm as a small capacity farm for the produc-

tion of meat and/or milk as long as it does not exceed 10 LSU, which is equivalent to 12 adult horses intended for the production of meat or milk, or 29 foals intended for fattening.

- For all other activities not related to the production of meat and/or milk, we will consider as a small-capacity equine farm that which does not exceed 5 LSU, which is equivalent to a maximum of 6 animals intended for breeding activity for saddle, in leisure farms or in other special farms.

In addition, it is important to indicate that equine farms must be designed with a system that guarantees that animals are maintained within a delimited area, so as to reduce or control the entry of animals that are possible disease vectors. In these cases, stables or stalls in which the animals are housed shall ensure that no animals from the outside gain entry.

Together with the communication to the authorities, it is also necessary to submit a descriptive report of the activities (in accordance with the standardised model that can be found on the website <http://www.gencat.cat>), the accreditation of the ownership of

---

The concept of self-consumption is not defined for horses; the concept of small-capacity farm is used.

---

Horse farms must be designed with a system that guarantees animals will be kept within a delimited area, so as to reduce or control the entry of animals that are possible disease vectors.

---

the livestock farm (except for centres that only store genetic material) and the declaration that the corresponding town hall has the environmental notice.

Resolution of the registration proceeding in the register of livestock farms:

**04. Resolution**

**DARP Area Office**

- Evaluation of the application for registration of the farm
- Inspection visit
- Drafting the report

↓

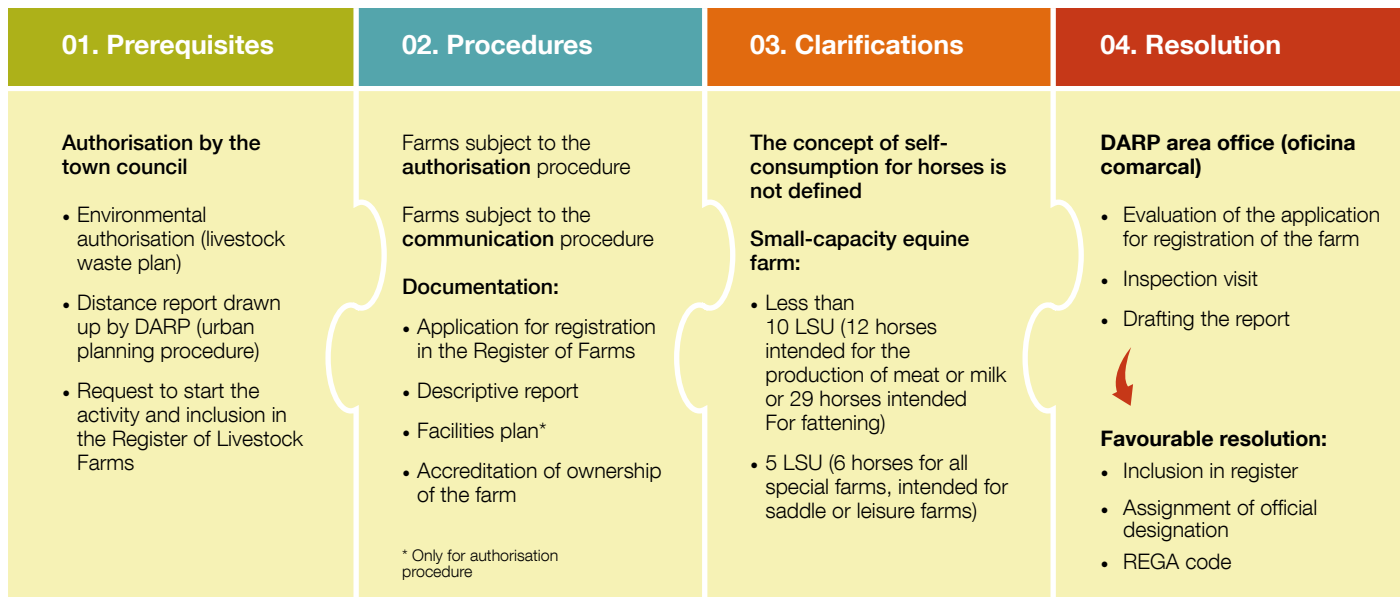
**Favourable resolution:**

- Inclusion in the Register
- Assignment of the Official designation
- REGA code

The DARP area office will evaluate the information sent by the requester and the owner of the livestock farm and will draw up a report, with a prior inspection visit to the farm in the event that it is a procedure subject to the authorisation procedure.

If the report is favourable, the procedure will continue and the resolution authorising the inclusion of the farm in the Register of Livestock Farms will be drawn up. Then, an official brand will be assigned, as will the identification code of the farm only valid in Catalonia and a REGA code (Registro General de Explotaciones Ganaderas) valid throughout Spain.

From this moment on, the farm will be able to start its livestock activity, make the movements it deems appropriate and market what it produces, where applicable.



**Figure 3.** Summary of the registration process of an equine farm in the Register of Livestock Farms. Source: Aleix Baltà

## 05. Horse identification

Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/62, of the Commission, of 17 February, and Royal Decree 676/2016, of 16 December, are the regulations that govern the horse identification and registration system.

These rules establish that horse owners must identify the animals within the first year of life and in any case before leaving the farm of birth.

An horse is considered correctly identified when:

- It is marked with an electronic chip or transponder,
- It has a passport or horse identification document (DIE, by its Catalan initials), and
- It is registered in the official database and in the records of the equine farm or facility.

The body in charge of issuing horse passports is different according to the type of horse. According to the identification process, there are two types of horses:

- Registered horses are those that are included in the pedigree register of

a recognised breed or in a competition animal register. The bodies issuing the passports for these animals must be recognised by the competent authority of their country. E.g.: Asociación Nacional de Criadores de Caballos de Pura Raza Española (National Association of Purebred Spanish Horse Breeders)

- All other horses are rearing and breeding horses, and the body in charge of issuing their passports in Catalonia is the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (DARP, by its Catalan initials).

To handle the identification of rearing and breeding horses, the owners must contact a veterinarian authorised to conduct horse identification procedures in Catalonia.

These professionals will implant the chip in the animal, collect basic identification data and process the application to obtain the passport at DARP. Once printed, the passport will be sent to the DARP area office (called 'oficina comarcal' in Catalan) corresponding to the area (comarca) where the horse is located so that the holder can collect it and pay the corresponding fee. If the passport is lost, the same procedure will be followed to obtain a duplicate

passport. Generally, the issuance of a duplicate passport supposes that the horse becoming unfit for human consumption.

If a horse is identified after the period established by the regulations, a substitute passport is issued and the animal may never be sent for human consumption.

As a general rule, the passport must accompany the horse when the animal is transported.

When acquiring a horse, the owner must process the change of ownership at DARP within 30 days.

When a horse dies, with the exception of slaughter at an abattoir, the horse owner must notify DARP within 15 days and must return the horse's pass-

---

**If a horse is identified after the period established by the regulations, a substitute passport is issued and the animal may never be sent for human consumption.**

---



port for destruction within 30 days. The management of the animal's body must be handled by an authorised company.

## 06. Moving horses

With regard to moving horses, the owners of farms and horse facilities must:

- See to obtaining the health documentation for transfer (guides issued by veterinarians or documentation issued by the owner) necessary for any type of movement.
- Advise DARP of all entries and exits of horses within 7 days from the realisation of the movement, as set out in Royal Decree 728/2007, of 13 June, which establishes and regulates the Registre General de Moviments de Bestiar (General Register of Movements of Livestock) and the Registre General d'Identificació Individual d'Animals (General Register of Individual Animal Identification).

These operations must be carried out at the DARP area offices or online through the computer application GTR (Gestió Telemàtica Ramadera).

The Horse Movement Card (TME, by its Catalan Initials) allows temporary movements of a recreational and sporting na-

ture of up to 30 days within Spain without travel health documentation and without having to advise of movements, as long as the horse returns to its point of origin. The TME must be requested through veterinarians authorised to conduct equine identification procedures and shall always accompany the passport. Arrivals and departures with the TME shall be recorded in the farm's records, like all other movements.

## 07. Suitability for human consumption

Horses are animals that can be sent to the slaughterhouse, but it must be kept in mind that, apart from the express will of the animal owner, there are different reasons why a horse may become unfit for human consumption. Horses can become unsuitable for human consumption temporarily for 6 months (basically due to veterinary treatments) or definitively and irreversibly for the entire life of the animal.

Horse owners are obligated to notify DARP of the change in status to unsuitable for human consumption within 14 days from the date of the loss of suitability and to ensure that this fact is noted in the corresponding section of the passport.

Owners of horse farms and facilities must:

- See to obtaining health documentation for transfers.
- Notify DARP of all arrivals and departures.

Owners of farms that send horses for slaughter are responsible for verifying the animal's suitability for human consumption.

Owners of farms that send horses for slaughter are responsible for verifying the animal's suitability for human consumption.

Veterinarians who administer a treatment that prevents the animal from entering the food chain, either temporarily (6 months) or permanently, must make the corresponding entry in the passport and also has 14 days to notify DARP.

The change from suitable to unsuitable will be recorded in the official database.

Author



### Aleix Baltà Arandes

Veterinarian.  
Livestock Management Service.  
Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (DARP).  
aleix.balta@gencat.cat



### Sandra Corbalán Martínez

Head of Animal Tracing. Animal Health Prevention Service.  
Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food.  
sandra.corbalan@gencat.cat

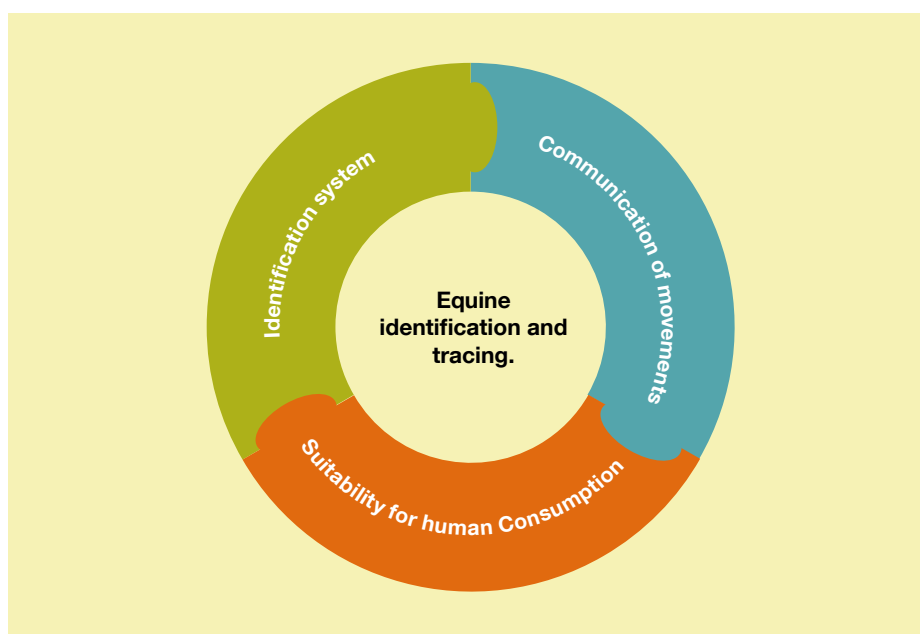


Figure 4. Equine identification and tracing. Source: Sandra Corbalán.

# MANAGEMENT OF VETERINARY TREATMENTS at farms for sport, leisure and companion horses

## 01. Introduction

Veterinary medicines are a valuable tool in maintaining the health and well-being of sport, leisure and companion horses. Therefore, it is important to know which medicines are authorised for the treatment of these animals, where to obtain them legally, and to be aware of the requirement that all treatment be prescribed by a veterinarian.

Abusive and inappropriate use of veterinary medicines can lead to the presence of residues in food produced from horses suitable for human consumption, as well as resistance to antibiotics or environmental problems.

## 02. Acquisition of authorised medicines

Medicines, due to their special characteristics, must be evaluated and authorised before they enter the market, with the aim of protecting the health of animals. For this reason, only medicines that have previously been authorised by the Spanish Agency for Medicines and Health Products (AEMPS) or by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) can be administered in Spain. All medicines authorised for veterinary use can be found in the CimaVet search tool on the AEMPS website or in the Cima search tool when dealing with medicines for human use.

Additionally, a medicine's condition of authorisation establishes whether it is subject to a veterinary prescription or not. The dispensation and administration of most horse medicines requires a

Acquiring medicines outside of legal channels -such by using the internet to buy medicines that require a prescription or by purchasing medicines in another country- puts the health of animals at risk, since these medicines do not meet the established legal requirements.

prescription from a veterinarian.

Compounding or on-site preparations made by a pharmacist can also be administered, as long as they are ordered by a veterinary prescription. These products are also considered veterinary medications.

On the other hand, authorised medicines must be brought to market and sold through the established legal channels, and therefore must be obtained from commercial veterinary medicine retailers or authorised pharmacies.

Only if there is a therapeutic gap due to the lack of a medicine authorised in Spain may a veterinarian exceptionally prescribe a medicine authorised in another EU member state. But in these cases the medicine's destination is the veterinarian's in-house pharmacy or the farm where the animal to be treated is located and such medicines can

never enter the commercial market.

Acquiring medicines outside of legal channels -such by using the internet to buy medicines that require a prescription or by purchasing medicines in another country- puts the health of animals at risk, since these medicines do not meet the established legal requirements.

Therefore, the medicines used to treat horses on farms can be obtained in two ways:

- Medicines dispensed in a veterinary medicine retail store or in a pharmacy.
- Medicines given or applied by the clinical veterinarian himself, from its own pharmacy.

In the event that, once the treatment is finished, not all of the prescribed medication has been used, the extra medicine can remain in the possession of the horse owner or the owner of the equestrian centre. In this case, the veterinarian may re-prescribe the remaining medicine in the event of the appearance of a new illness that is treated with the same medicine, as long as it is kept in the original packaging, under the established conditions and has not expired. However, the veterinarian will need to issue a new prescription solely for this use and not valid for dispensing.

As a general rule, medicines must be kept in a safe place and away from other products. That is, they must be kept in a clean, cool and dry place and, if necessary, they must be kept in a refrigerator.

We must also take into account that expired medicines, as well as empty containers, needles and other material used in the treatment of horses must be properly managed through a contract with an authorised waste manager, or disposed of by the veterinarian, as is the case of small farms that generate a small volume of this type of waste.

### 03. Administering veterinary medicines

When the medicines are administered by the animal or facility owners, the veterinarian's instructions listed with the prescription must be followed.

With antibiotics in particular, the obligation to respect the veterinarian's instructions on the dose and duration of the treatment will not only determine the success of the treatment, but will prevent the bacteria from becoming resistant to antibiotics.

Prudent use of antibiotics in veterinary medicine is critical to tackling antibiotic resistance in bacteria

### 04. Particular features of horses

An horse is considered fit for human consumption from its birth, whether it is a horse bred for this purpose on a meat production farm or a horse to be

ridden in a club or riding centre. The horse, however, is the only animal that has the particular characteristic of being permanently disqualified for human consumption and, therefore, no longer be considered a food-producing animal.

The reasons for this disqualification are:

- That the property owner or the horse owner decides, of his/her own accord, that the animal not enter the food chain.
- That the veterinarian administers medicines that contain substances not suitable for food-producing animals.
- That the administration disqualifies the horse for consumption due to irregularities in its identification.

In these cases, the signature of the person responsible for the disqualification must appear in the "Administration of veterinary medicinal products" part of the HID or horse passport. Additionally, the owner or holder of the horse must bring the passport to the area office to be stamped within 14 days from the signature on the passport or the signature of the veterinarian.

Currently, only 1% of sport, leisure or company horses are properly disqualified for human consumption. This implies that all other horses must be considered fit for human consumption and,

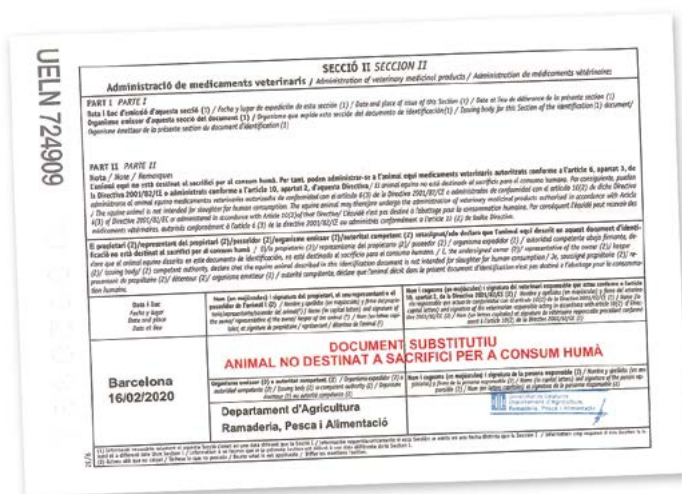
at the end of their productive life, may enter the food chain in the event of sale or change of owner. For this reason, they must comply with the drug regulations like any other food-producing animal, such as a calf or a pig.

### 05. Record all treatments and save prescriptions for animals suitable for human consumption

One of the main obligations of farms for food-producing is to keep a register of all veterinary treatments administered to the animals.

Therefore, farms where there are horses suitable for consumption must also have this register.

The purpose of the register of veterinary treatments is to record, in chronological order, all treatments prescribed and administered to horses suitable for consumption and which may enter the food chain. With this registration, the horse owners or owners of the farms where the animals are kept can confirm at any time that the acquisition, possession and application of veterinary medicines has been properly done. In addition, recording the treatments administered to a horse can be very useful for the veterinarian when choosing proper treatment in the future.



Substitute document of animal not intended for slaughter for human consumption. Source: DARP.



Mandatory data from the register of veterinary treatments. Source: DARP.

If an animal has been declared unfit for consumption and its passport disabled, it is not mandatory to record the veterinary treatments starting from the date of their disqualification in the farm's register of veterinary treatments.

The data that must be included in the treatment record are the date of the prescription, the dose and duration of the prescribed treatment and the waiting time. These data are the responsibility of the veterinarian. The identification of the medicine and the name and address of the supplier of the medicine must also be included. Those data are the responsibility of the owner of the farm. Lastly, the date of treatment, the dose and duration of the treatment applied and the identification of the treated animals must be recorded.

These data are the responsibility of the person who administers the medicine, be it the veterinarian, the owner of the farm or the owner of the animals.

Any records in any format -on paper, via computer or horse passport entries- that contains at least the required data, will be considered valid as a register of veterinary treatment.

For example, an ordered archive of prescriptions with extended treatment

data may be valid as a record. Most of the data that must be entered in the treatment record is already mandatory in the veterinary prescription.

Therefore, the person administering the medication must note on the prescription the date on which the medication is administered and the unique identification number of the treated horse, if it does not already appear on the prescription.

The public administration proposed a paper form containing all the mandatory registration data. The different sheets that make up the register of veterinary treatments must be numbered consecutively. This system is useful in equestrian centres where the horses are owned by the same owner, for example.

Furthermore, it is also possible to keep an individualised record of treatments for each horse stabled at an equestrian centre, so that for each animal all the treatments it has received throughout its life will be recorded. This system is more useful for clubs or equestrian centres where there are boarded horses or horses treated by different veterinarians, for example.

The register of veterinary treatments and prescriptions of veterinary medi-

cines must be kept at the farm for at least 5 years from the last entry or from the date of issue and must be made available to the competent authority .

### 06. Treatments with essential substances on horses suitable for human consumption

In addition, horses suitable for human consumption, unlike other food-producing species, have a list of specific essential substances for the treatment of their illnesses, even if those substances are not authorised for food producing animals. These essential substances must be included in Regulation (EC) no. 1950/2006.

The reason for these exceptional permissions is the low availability of medicines authorised for horses suitable for human consumption, in comparison to other species such as calves or pigs. For this reason and to increase the possibilities for treatment of this species without compromising the level of consumer health protection, horses can receive treatments with these essential substances on the condition that they submit to a waiting period of 6 months.

When a horse receives treatment with any of these substances, the treating veterinarian must detail in the part III

Form for register of veterinary treatments. Source: DARP.

Section of the passport to record treatments with essential substances. Source: DARP.

of the horse's passport, specifically in the section 'Administration of Veterinary Medicines', the substance administered and the date of administration. Likewise, the facility owner or the horse owner must also take the passport to the regional office to be stamped within 14 days from the veterinarian's signature on the passport.

### 07. The passport as register of veterinary treatments

Only treatments that disqualify the animal from human consumption and treatments with essential substances must be noted in the passport. For other veterinary treatments, regulations do not require them to be noted in the passport. Even so, sometimes veterinarians must record treatments in the passport at the request of a federation or competition organisation, as in the case of vaccinations for sport horses. These entries in the corresponding section of the passport can be valid as a record of treatments and do not need to be repeated, as long as they are supplemented with the record of the other treatments administered.

### 08. Know the waiting period and keep to it with horses suitable for human Consumption

The waiting period is the time that must pass between the last administration of the medicine and the slaughter of the animal for human consumption. It exists to prevent the presence of residues of the medicine in the animal's meat, and thus guarantee consumer food safety.

The waiting period is set out in the conditions of authorisation of the medicine, provided that the medicine is administered under the normal conditions of use. 'Normal conditions of use' means respecting the dose, the route of administration and the target species for which it has been authorised. It must always be includ-

ed in the prescription of a horse that is not disqualified from consumption.

Any change in the conditions of use of a medicine can lead to adverse reactions in animals or the appearance of residues in food, which is why an adequate waiting period must be set.

For this reason, in the event that the veterinarian modifies the dose or the route of administration compared to what is set out in the prospectus, they must set a new the waiting time appropriate for the medicine's new administration conditions. In addition, in the event that the veterinarian, in exceptional circumstances, wants to prescribe a medicine authorised for another species or a medicine for human use, they must set a waiting period of at least 28 days for the meat, because the medicine does not have a waiting time established for horses. Finally, if you administer a medicine that contains an essential substance, the waiting time must be 6 months.

### 09. Conclusions

Veterinary treatments carried out on all equine farms must be managed responsibly, from the prescription, acquisition and application of medicines, up to and including their disposal. This is to ensure the health and welfare of both the animals and the environment. With antibiotic treatments, responsible management goes further, as it is essential to prevent antibiotic resistance.

In addition, those farms where there are horses that have not been expressly disabled for human consumption, and therefore, that at the end of their life can enter the food chain, must have a register of veterinary treatments where all the treatments administered to these fit-for-consumption horses are noted. Also, the owners of the farms must know and respect the waiting times. These requirements are necessary to guarantee food safety.

### To learn more

Website of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (DARP), Veterinary Medicines and Animal Health Products section: <http://agricultura.gencat.cat/ca/ambits/ramaderia/medicamentos-veterinaris/>

Website of the Spanish Agency for Medicines and Animal Health Products: <https://www.aemps.gob.es/home.htm>

MAPAMA website on Veterinary Medicines: <https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/ganaderia/temas/sanidad-animal-higiene-ganadera/higiene-de-la-produccion-primaria-ganadera/medicamentos-veterinarios/>

Vetresponsible Website: Guide to the Responsible Use of Veterinary Medicines. Horses: [http://www.vetresponsable.es/vetresponsable/guias-de-uso-responsable-por-especie-animal/guia-sobre-equino\\_3929\\_340\\_4075\\_0\\_1\\_in.html](http://www.vetresponsable.es/vetresponsable/guias-de-uso-responsable-por-especie-animal/guia-sobre-equino_3929_340_4075_0_1_in.html)

### Author



#### **Eva Soler Sellés**

Veterinarian.  
Animal Feed and Livestock Production Safety Service.  
Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food.  
[eva.soler@gencat.cat](mailto:eva.soler@gencat.cat)

# PRESENT AND FUTURE OF FACILITIES for sport, leisure and companion horses



Fence. Photo: Equuslife.

## 01. Introduction

Horses in a wild environment spend up to 16 hours a day eating grass in the meadows and can travel up to 30 kilometres a day, and this must be taken into account when organising horse life in any equestrian facility.

When it comes to equestrian facilities, a number of fundamental concepts regarding the safety and welfare of horses and their handling must be kept in mind. In this article we will review the innovative systems and accommodation possibilities in use at some centres.

## 02. Fences

Fences, in order to be suitable, must meet the following conditions:

- They must be easy for the animals to see, so that they have a 'sense' that the fences are there. If the animals do not see them, as happens with certain electric fences with vertical posts placed at great distances and cables that are hard to see, a horse may not see them and run into them.
- They must be "safe" and this concept is sometimes taken to such an extreme that the fences can become dangerous because of the injuries they might cause to our horses. In other words, we must, in any equestrian facility, use materials that absorb shocks. Iron, concrete, etc. are too hard and cause serious injuries. Also for safety reasons, we must avoid potentially sharp items such as inappropriately thin electrical wire, barbed wire and mesh.

It should be kept in mind that an inappropriate fence can cause serious accidents, handling problems and other issues.

It should be kept in mind that an inappropriate fence can cause serious accidents, handling problems and other issues.

Without a doubt, the electric fence is the great revolution in the horse world, whether properly installed on its own, or used together with traditional materials such as wood or PVC.

As for the heights of the fences, that will depend largely on three factors: the size of the horses, the type of installation, and the size of the installation.

For example:

- Paddocks: between 140 cm and 180 cm. The height of 180 cm may seem excessive, but it is necessary when working with studs.
- Competition tracks: between 110cm and 130 cm.
- Work tracks, riding schools, walkers, training circles, etc.: Between 130 cm and 150 cm.

On the other hand, we must bear in mind that the higher the fence, the more horizontal elements we will need, especially if we have ponies or foals- More horizontal elements will prevent them from escaping or getting trapped. Usually, two or three horizontals are installed.

### 03. Walkers

Walkers are an essential element in the facilities for all equestrian disciplines. There are many reasons to use a horse walker, such as:

- Provide the horse with fresh air and free movement, when, for example, there is not enough time to go to the field.
- An additional training method. There is no doubt that it is harder for a horse in good physical condition to injure itself.
- Benefiting horse health: many of the deformities in feet (and in other parts) are related to the lack of physical activity. Horses, as we said earlier, would spend an average of 16 hours a day grazing. This is why horses need more than an hour of exercise a day. Failure to do so can result in physical and psychological damage to horses: from cramps due to lack of movement, to mild behavioural disorders (such as stall kicking), or other more serious stable vices such as cribbing, wind sucking or rearing.

#### 03.01 Benefits of a horse walker

**Bones:** It strengthens bones and therefore improves defences against pathogens and cancer cells.

**Back:** Improves the development of the back muscles.

**Muscles:** It keeps muscle cells healthier through better blood saturation, as well as slowing the ageing process.

**Lungs:** It increases the saturation of blood and therefore improves the supply of oxygen and the elimination of carbon dioxide.

**Heart:** It strengthens the muscles of the heart, resulting in greater efficiency, lower pulse rate and blood pressure.

**Brain:** Increases blood saturation, which improves alertness and intellect.

**Reflexes:** Faster reflexes. Improved correction in the event of a misstep or imminent fall.

**Colic:** Highly effective for prevention and treatment of colic.

### 04. Stables

Stable size may vary depending on the horse. Not all breeds need the same space. Stables should be wide enough

to allow the horse to move comfortably, stretch and even roll over. It is very dangerous if a horse becomes trapped due to a lack of space when making this movement. The minimum recommended dimensions should be 3.5 m x 3.5 m (bigger, however, is better), and with a ceiling height of 3 m.

Regarding the characteristics of the stalls, some things to keep in mind are:

- It should be possible to open the top of the doors to allow the horse to stick its head out and look outside, thus avoiding boredom.
- Door latches should be out of reach of horses. Many horses learn to open them as they are very intelligent and observant animals.
- There must be securely anchored rings where a halter can be tied if needed.
- If there is a water line in the horse's area, it must have an automatic trough. This type of trough is very convenient and ensures a constant supply of water. However, they should be checked daily for clogs, and in extreme cold the water outlet device can freeze and stop working.
- A feeder, fixed at a certain height so that the horse cannot knock it over.
- Another option to supply the hay is to use nets or meshes designed for this purpose. These nets keep the horse entertained while eating and prevent the hay from being scattered on the ground.

#### 04.01 What types of stables are there?

Nowadays, horses can be kept in stalls or individual stables, or in large stable building divided into small stables located along a corridor. A single horse would be housed in each stall.

#### 04.02 Isolation box

In medium or large equestrian facilities, it is absolutely essential to have a box



Stable. Photo: Equuslife.

separate from the rest of the horses, where animals with contagious diseases can be housed.

### 05. Paddocks

A paddock is a stabling system for horses in which the animal has a covered area to shelter in -equivalent to a stable- and an outdoor space that the horse can access when it likes.

The covered area can be a prefabricated shed designed for this purpose, or a custom-built structure. The outdoor space has a fence or electric shepherd as its outer boundary. Generally, this space is small, measuring no more than a few hundred square metres. It does not have grass due to the constant trampling in the area. The soil is of the natural terrain of each area, which is suitable for the horse. Several paddocks can be placed in a row, so horses cannot run or interact with each other (except with the horse in the neighbouring paddock). However, the horses can see what is going on around them, roll around on the ground, bask in the sun, and have a short gallop in the available space, entering and exiting the box when they so desire.

#### 05.01 Dynamic and/or active paddock

The dynamic and/or active paddock is a stable system that aims to create a domestic environment as similar as

A paddock is a stabling system for horses in which the animal has a covered area to shelter in -equivalent to a stable or stall- and an outdoor space that the horse can access when it likes.

possible to the horses' natural habitat in order to meet all their specific needs, thus promoting both physical and emotional well-being in the horses.

Instead of housing horses in regular square or oblong fields where they just stay in one place and eat, an extra fence is added "inside" to create a "track" system. (fig.1). The 3 basic parts of a dynamic paddock are the track, basic needs and environmental enrichment.

**The Track:** It is a path of variable width

according to assorted internal and external factors, bounded by two fences, which creates an infinite circuit. The circuit should take full advantage of the possibilities of each estate where it is established, making the route as attractive and varied as possible with ascents, descents, closed areas, wooded areas, open areas, etc. This path mimics the paths generated by wild horses in their wild environment.

**Basic needs:** Horses, like any other animal, need incentives to keep their minds occupied and to generate a need



Paddock. Photo: Zanetti Rural Services.

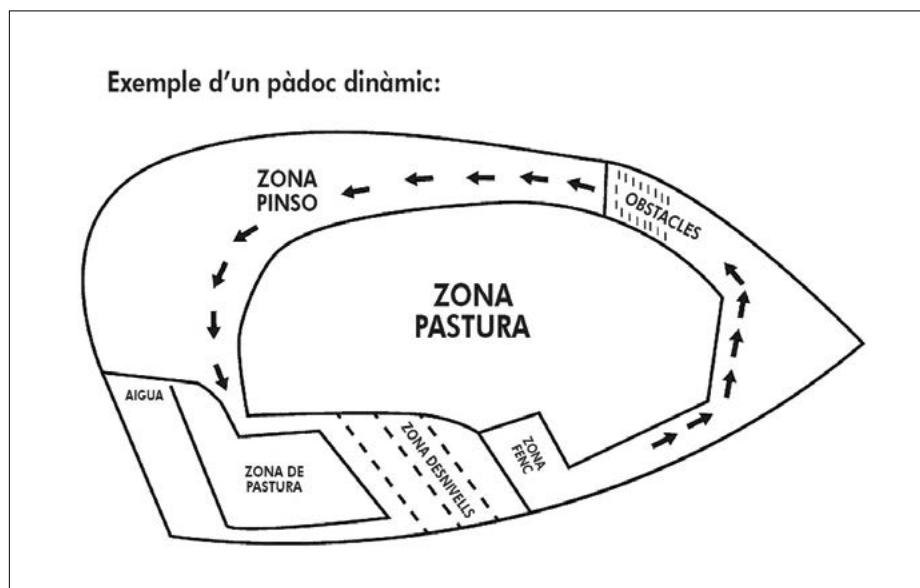


Figure 1. Schematic of a dynamic paddock. Source: Paddock Vallès.





Active paddock. Photo: Paddock Activo Collserola.



Semi-free range horses. Photo: Equuslife.

to move from one point in space to another. There is nothing that motivates animals of all kinds more than seeking the things they need to survive. These elements are mainly food, water and salt, and secondarily shelter and sand and/or mud, which serve to keep the coat in perfect condition and manage to keep skin parasites at bay. These needs are usually placed in a scattered and clever way along the track, in expansions known as bubbles, in order to provide maximum stimulation to the minds and bodies of the horses that live in the paddock.

**Environmental enrichment:** This part is made up of all elements or actions that we can include in the paddock to make it a more attractive, enriching and stimulating environment. In

this section you would find permanent elements -such as varied surfaces, obstacles, trees, aromatic plants, elevated spots- and temporary elements such as smells, hidden prizes, one-way doors, tunnels made of plants or other materials, balls filled with treats, big balls the horses can push, among other things.

## 06. Semi-free range horses

The horses share space in the form of a stable social group, and live together in wooded and pastured spaces. In addition, they are provided with food and water daily and the animals' condition is checked. This system is being put into use in horse shelters and in some equestrian centres that have the appropriate facilities.

An adaptation period is necessary to make stable social groups. It must be kept in mind that not all animals can be part of this group (studs, for instance, may not). It is a system that meets the animals' needs for well-being.

The space required will depend on the size of the group and must be properly enclosed. It must also have areas to shelter from inclement weather, such as rain or extreme heat.

An adaptation period is necessary to make stable social groups. It must be kept in mind that not all animals can be part of this group (studs, for instance, may not). It is a system that meets the animals' needs for well-being.

## To learn more

[www.aanhcp.net](http://www.aanhcp.net)

[www.jaimejackson.com](http://www.jaimejackson.com)

<http://paddockparadise.net>

[www.equus-life.com](http://www.equus-life.com)

[www.paddockactivocollserola.com](http://www.paddockactivocollserola.com)

[www.paddockvalles.com](http://www.paddockvalles.com)

W. Jackson, J. (2018) Paddock Paradise: A Guide to Natural Horse Boarding. Star Ridge Publishing.

## Author



### Gemma Valentí Vidal

Director and editor of the magazine "Hípica Catalana i Balear".

[gemma.valenti@gmail.com](mailto:gemma.valenti@gmail.com)

# NEW TRENDS in hoof management



Hoof boot for unshod horse. Photo: M. Sánchez.

## 01. Introduction

Barefoot horses have gained popularity in recent years, as most owners and many caregivers have become more aware that many ailments and injuries in horses are due to our lack of knowledge on the proper management and care of these large animals.

Although domestic horses have been with us since the dawn of civilisation, this relationship hasn't necessarily facilitated the proper care of these animals. Horse management has been steeped in traditional concepts passed down through the centuries, combining empirical wisdom with a lot of ignorance regarding

the horse's biological nature and its needs to remain as healthy as possible.

Within this context, and with the easy and rapid access we have to all kinds of information through the internet and social media, managing horses without shoes, often referred to as 'barefoot', is becoming a more feasible option. This approach is accompanied by concepts of well-being in lifestyle and nutrition.

This 'movement' is also linked to hoof protection systems that are used when needed rather than permanently, in contrast to horseshoes. These new hoof protection systems bring new materials and updated concepts to equine

podiatry, offering greater efficiency and healthier alternatives.

## 02. What is a barefoot horse?

Essentially, a barefoot horse is managed as independently and healthily as possible, with periodic trimming based on the needs of each case and the environmental conditions.

These trimming systems are based on observation and study of the unshod hooves of wild horse populations from around the world, such as the North American Mustangs from the Great Basin or Brumbies from many areas of Australia .

## 03. An appropriate environment for barefoot horses

Healthy hooves are a reliable indicator of each horse's lifestyle, so it is vital to consider their environment. A clean, spacious environment, with various ground textures and diverse spaces will diversify movement patterns and improve hoof wear and the physical and mental health of the horse. Horses naturally engage in this task on their own during the day and night, with the intensity of effort they deem necessary. This self-preparation better equips them for our demands.

Horses are social animals, forming-herd cultures that are essential for their well-being. In this environment they can exercise and express all their social skills and everything that stems from those relations. Additionally, from a physical and hoof perspective, numerous studies have shown that horses in groups move significantly more, making their physical design more functional.

To create this environment and prevent accidents and tension within horse groups, it is essential to design paddocks, paths and tracks thoughtfully.

Grouping horses can modify animal behaviour using concepts such as Paddock Paradise®, VRG (Voisin Rational Grazing) and some permaculture principles.

#### 04. Nutrition

Numerous nutritional studies have found scientific consensus that horses, being monogastric, non-ruminant herbivores, require more fibre than protein, in small amounts and frequently. It has also been observed that in this type of paddock, where they have access to appropriate food throughout the day, their behaviour changes and becomes more stable.

Specialists suggest that horses require a combination of hay and grass-like plants, and if possible some non-forage pasture. This way, when horses graze and search for more food in a large and diverse environment, they move more, which significantly im-

proves hoof health and promotes their overall well-being. This represents a paradigm shift, as it shifts the focus from unhealthiness to health.

#### 05. New hoof protection systems

Within the barefoot horse 'movement' there are different tendencies. The pursuits advocate for 'barefoot horses always', even during work. However, this is easier said than done, as there are many factors to consider.

As a result, the most widely accepted and practical approach involves the use of boots designed for horses. These boots are easy to put on and take off, and there is a wide variety available on the market to suit different activities and budgets.

For horses with athletic or high-demand work, as well as cases of pathology and orthopedic needs, there are boots that essentially function as a second hoof, without any kind of attachment or gaiters similar to pull-on boots. These boots are made of highly adaptable materials that can be

When horses graze and look for more food in a large and diverse environment, they move more and all the hoof structures improve exponentially, bringing out the best of themselves. This represents a paradigm shift, since until now we used to work with lack of health and now we work with health.

The most accepted and functional proposal is the use of hoof boots. This is footwear that can be put on and taken off. There is a wide range of options on the market according to horse activity and the buyer's budget.



Palmar view of a healthy foot. Horses of Baldomar. Photo: M. Sánchez



Paddock Paradise® La Lena. Photo: M. Sanchez.



Side view of a bare hoof just after trimming. Horses of Baldomar. Photo: M. Sánchez.



Image from the barefoot horse management course at the Escola Agrària del Pirineu. Photo: M. Sánchez.

modified and customised, representing a promising avenue to explore.

It's worth noting that these new hoof protection systems are more respectful of the hoof's mechanics and soft tissues. Ideally, they should tend towards minimalism to enhance functionality. Resins combined with synthetic fibres opens up possibilities for more integrated and minimalist hoof protection, especially for orthopaedic purposes.

## 06. The role of a hoof care professional

The role of a modern hoof care professional is similar to what it is in human podiatry. They are responsible for the health and functionality of the hooves. This means keeping up to date with what studies exist on anatomy, biomechanics, diseases and their triggers, etc. and what materials and tools would improve our work.

This professional must also know how to use techniques and knowledge of handling the horse with his feet on the ground in order not to end up being too punitive or unfair in the treatment, and thus improve the way we do our work. At the same time, they must be some-

one aware of the moment we are in and be an essential piece in the transformation of our sector towards better practices in all possible areas of horse welfare.

## 07. Experience at the escola agrària del Pirineu

The Escola Agrària del Pirineu (Pyrenees Agricultural School) equestrian farm began in 2011, as the main resource for educational activities in the equestrian field, both for initial professional training and for continuing education. Currently, the school offers an intermediate level Equestrian Activity Technician training course. Courses have been held for the qualifications of guide, foal dressage and horse handling. Likewise, the school, with the collaboration of the Associació de Ferradors de Catalunya (Catalonia Horseshoers' Association), offered a two-year course, with a dual modality (tutored training in a company and theoretical training in alternate weeks). In 2018, as part of the centre's continuous education program, barefoot horse management courses began with Marc Sánchez and Bernat Víctor. These courses were very successful and have been expanded further

in 2019. The school has incorporated this new knowledge and has more and more unshod horses (currently 13 horses taking classes), as well as some hoof boot models, but is still learning the intricacies that boots can have in situations maximum effort.

## Author



### Mireia Fabra Garcia

Veterinarian.  
Teacher at the Escola Agrària del Pirineu.  
Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (DARP).  
mireia.fabra@gencat.cat



### Marc Sánchez Carbó.

Equine podiatrist and orthopedist.  
Trainer and communicator on the barefoot horse and its management.  
marc.ferrador@gmail.com



## A Conversation with MARTA CAMPRUBÍ

Manager and co-owner of "Hípica La Tossa" centre.  
Santa Margarida de Montbui, Anoia.

"Due to their nature, it is very important for horses to live in a group. They are herd animals and need to be able to relate to each other"

Marta Camprubí Rodríguez grew up in a farming family near Manresa. She has always been in touch with animals. Her father had a farm of beef cows, which grazed the forests.

Before creating the equestrian centre, her professional connection with equestrianism was in the business world, but in 2004, together with her partner, she opened Hípica la Tossa as a complement to the family farm which her partner has managed since 2000.

Since then, they have been learning non-stop, both about riding and about the world of teaching to be able to offer the best possible services. Currently, she co-manages the equestrian centre and is in charge of the administrative tasks of the farm.

Today, the reality is that the stabling system is changing in the equestrian world and more and more centres are choosing to take horses out of boxes and provide them with more space. This is the case of the Hípica la Tossa, located in Santa Margarida de Montbui, Barcelona. They have Natural Paddocks, a revolutionary system of equine housing that aims to allow the horses living there to engage in most of the relationships and behaviours they would exhibit if they were in the wild in order to maintain both their physical and emotional well-being. The multiple benefits for the animals have already been demonstrated, and the opportunity to live in a group allows them to interact with each other, a key aspect of their nature.

Your equestrian centre is a family-oriented space where you offer experiences to learn and share the benefits that horses bring. What are those benefits?

We could mention a long list of benefits, but perhaps I would emphasise that being in contact with horses brings us well-being, a connection to the earth, which is very important not to lose. Often, our fast-paced life disconnects us from who we truly are and, in my opinion, horses help us reconnect to that. They also allow us to enjoy nature; studies are continuously proving the importance of having contact with nature, of spending time outdoors. Horses facilitate this as well; they offer us the opportunity to create an emotional bond with an animal, which has a positive impact on many aspects of our health.

"Horses offer us the opportunity to create an emotional bond with an animal, which has a positive impact on many aspects of our health"

What activities/services do you offer? Who is your target audience?

We can divide the activities into two areas: boarding and horse-related activities. Regarding boarding, we offer the Natural Paddock and individual semi-liberty paddocks with wooden shelter. As for activities with horses, we offer riding lessons for children, activities for schools, equine therapy and summer camps.

How many horses do you have, and what are their characteristics?

We currently have 38 horses at the centre. Most are mixed-breed horses. The horses owned by others are used for forest outings, but some are already retired and live in the Natural Paddock. We also have some foals and young horses, while our school horses are mostly ponies of various sizes.

You are located in a privileged environment in Santa Margarida de Montbui, surrounded by nature, and fully equipped. What facilities do you have?

The centre has 16 hectares of land, which includes all our facilities. The Natural Paddock has a 3 km circuit, the active paddock covers 500 m<sup>2</sup> and the individual paddocks are also 500 m<sup>2</sup>. In addition, we have five riding tracks, an exclusive tack room for clients, and a 75 m<sup>2</sup> social area.

As horse lovers, your goal is the well-being of the animals, and you believe that positive horsemanship is possible for horses and riders. What does this entail, and how does it benefit both parties?

When we talk about positive horsemanship for both the horse and the rider, we are referring to the understanding we believe riders must have of the nature of the animal and its basic needs.

Horsemanship should not only benefit the rider; there should be respect for the horse, and an effort to find a balance for both.

Being aware of all these aspects, communication with the horse becomes much smoother, learning can be faster, and the results for both horse and rider can be more positive.

---

"Horse riding should not only be beneficial for the rider; there must be respect for the horse and an effort to find a balance for both"

---

Furthermore, discovering the behaviour of the animal and their instincts, and especially understanding their learning system, makes you more respectful and patient with their reactions.

We believe that it is the rider's responsibility to know their horse, to be able to understand when there is any difficulty or discomfort and to be able to help the horse resolve it.

Where did your love for horses originate? What do you like most about them?

I have always been around animals, I was born among calves, lambs and other animals. My parents say that I always asked for a horse for Christmas. I think I've liked them for as long as I can remember, I was fascinated by watching them.

It's been almost 20 years since I had my first horse, which is still alive and enjoying the Natural Paddock, and since then I have always been with them. To me, they are very special creatures. I admire their ability to connect with the earth, to live in the present moment, their sensitivity, their calmness, their nobility... I am constantly surprised by the way they show us how our own state, serving as mirrors to us.

---

"To me, horses are very special creatures. I admire their ability to connect with the earth, to live in the present moment, their sensitivity, their calmness, their nobility..."

---

At your centre you have different types of boards to adapt to the needs of each horse and owner. What are these types and what are their characteristics?

We offer boarding within the Natural Paddock, where the horses live in groups within a 3 km circuit. It is an active paddock where we want the horses to be in constant motion and to recreate on a smaller scale what they would do if they were living in the wild.

As for the dynamic paddock, it houses horses in a small group. This option is more suitable for horses who have difficulties living in the large paddock. Movement is also promoted in this paddock, but it's more limited.

Finally, we have individual paddock of about 500 m<sup>2</sup> where the horse has shelter and an open space where it can move around. Within this space, they tend to live alone, although there are other horses nearby with whom they can interact.

In your equestrian centre, you have horses stabled individually and horses in groups for a long time. What are the differences between these two situations?

The majority of the horses, about 75%, live in groups. We have been transitioning most of our boarding to group living for the past five years, even if it is only two horses in a group.

For us, the difference lies in the well-being of the horse. By nature, living in a group is very important, since they are herd animals and they need to socialise. In addition, there are physical benefits as well, as it generates much more movement, which is very important for them, as a lack of movement can lead to injuries and illnesses.

Apart from ample space, what other essential requirements do you consider to ensure the well-being of free-range horses (shelter, pasture, etc.)?

It is important that their space have different areas, such as a wooded area with shade, high points, sandy areas, areas with different slopes, rocky areas, and pastures. Our paddock has a sheltered area for rainy seasons, for example.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of keeping horses in a free environment?

The advantages are numerous, as we explained earlier. By nature, horses are animals that need to live in herds, move continuously, and graze. This leads to better physical health and prevents joint problems. There are also significant mental health benefits, as it helps avoid behaviours caused by boredom or lack of movement.

---

**"By nature, horses are animals that need to live in herds, move continuously, and graze"**

---

The main disadvantage of having horses in a free environment is mainly for the people, since managing and caring for the space requires more work and dedication than having the horses all grouped in boxes.

From a practical point of view, how are the spaces where the horses are kept in a free environment managed?

Over the years, we have adapted the Natural Paddock for our convenience. This has been possible by closely

observing the behaviour of the horses and their routines, and adjusting management accordingly. At this point, it's very convenient for us to manage, although we are continuously adapting to the needs of the group. It is a space in constant motion.

Have you had any cases where there was a noticeable positive change in horses with the transition to free-range stabling (changes in behaviour, improvements in skin conditions, or similar)?

The most significant change that made us decide to embrace this system was the experience with the school horses used for classes with children. Their behaviour improved positively; they no longer required prior work before classes, and they were relaxed and mentally well-balanced. Their physical condition demonstrated that the change was very positive for them. Currently, all the horses that work in the school live in this space.

For older and retired horses, we have observed an excellent acceptance of the new life style, they benefit physically from it. However, we must take special care with individual diets based on their needs.

In the world of equestrian centres in general, there is a long tradition of keeping horses in individual stalls/paddocks/boxes. Do you believe there will be a change in trends in the coming years? If so, why?

Currently, the reality is that the stabling system is changing. Many centres are opting to take horses out of boxes, giving them more space, even if it is not always possible to have large spaces. Small changes are being made that are positive for the horses. From here, we encourage centres that may have doubts or that may not see the practicality of it to try making small changes, and they will see that the results are very positive.

Furthermore, there are increasingly more horse owners seeking a space where they can have their horse live in a way that aligns with their needs.

---

**"Currently, it is becoming a reality that the stable system is changing. Many centres are opting to take horses out of boxes, giving them more space"**

---

Hípica la Tossa  
<https://hipicalatossa.com>



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Departament d'Agricultura,  
Ramaderia, Pesca i Alimentació



xarxa-i.cat  
Xarxa d'Innovació agroalimentària  
i rural de Catalunya