



Your Horse's Vital Signs






(USPC D Manual 2nd Ed. , p224)

Name: TEACHER COPY Date _____

Helpful supplies:

- equine thermometer, latex gloves (any plastic/rubber gloves will do)
- picture/poster of horse to show where to take pulse
- watches with second hand for practicing pulse taking

**** ASK:** What does TPR mean? and Does it have other names? ("Vital Signs", "Vitals", as in "What are the horse's vitals?")






1. Temperature  What is this? The degree of heat inside horse's body
2. Pulse  What is this? how fast his heart is beating
3. Respiration Rate  What is this? how fast he is breathing

WHY should you know your horse's vital signs?

* Shows if the pony is healthy, fit, conditioned

*When vital signs are abnormal, horse may be ill

What to do for your horse:

- 1) Know what is normal for your horse 
- 2) Take 2 readings when you know your horse is healthy and fit **2**
 - a) at REST 
 - b) after WORKING (after cool-out) 
- 3) Write it down in your record book & stall Card 
- 4) Take his vital signs if you think he is ill 

- *SAY: We are going to learn how to take all 3 of these vital signs*

Temperature



What is a normal equine temperature? 99 to 100.5 (it is listed incorrectly in the USPC D manual)

When is it lowest? in the morning (same with humans) _____

When is it higher? later in the day _____

In what area of the horse is the temp taken? rectally _____

What equipment is used? a vet thermometer with a ring and string (sometimes a clip) _____



- *Show the thermometer. Show how to read the mercury. If digital, show how to turn it on, read it, & reset it. Let each member try.*

***A glass thermometer is more accurate than a digital, but either will work.*

➤ *Explain to dip in Vaseline, explain why. Explain about gloves.*

➤ *Show how to clean it and why (biohazard from one horse to another) and how to store it.*

**As of 2013, the US Pony Club no longer allows glass/mercury thermometers in the team rally box.*

Why do you need a special thermometer?



Clip or tie string to horses' tail/ wait 2-3 minutes. **Keeps the thermometer from sliding into the horse, or falling onto the ground**

Pulse



What is a normal equine pulse rate? between 30 and 45 beats per minute _____

In what area of the horse can the pulse be found easily? press lightly on the facial artery (crosses the jawbone) ***Show poster of Horse, point out spots to find pulse*

What is the formula for figuring the pulse rate? Look at watch & count how many beats in 15 seconds. Multiply this by 4 to get the pulse (heart rate)

e=mc²

***Have each student find their own pulse.*

***Using the watch, you count out 15 seconds and have them figure their own heart rate.*

***Have them try to find a partner's pulse and calculate*

Respiration Rate



What is a normal equine respiration rate? between 8 and 16 breaths per minute

In what area of the horse can you count the respiration rate?__

-by **LOOKING** at either his flank or nostrils.

-Count either **IN** or **OUT** breath, not both, for **15 seconds**.

***Point out the flank on the horse poster*



What is the formula for figuring the respiration rate? Multiply by 4

***Have each student count the IN or OUT breaths of a partner & calculate*

Rating Requirements:

D3 - Know vital signs of mount at rest and what TPR stands for.

C1 - Know the acceptable ranges for temperature, pulse, and respiration for a mount at rest and the importance of these numbers.

C2 - Know vital signs of own mount at work. AND Measure and record pulse, temperature and respiration of own mount at rest with assistance if necessary.

(Created by the Shore Riders Pony Club, 2009. Updated 2012, 2022)

