

## Miniature Horse Care:

Miniature horses are fun and easy-care pets. They are not prone to illness, and following a few simple guidelines, they live happy, healthy lives.

### **Long feet and becoming overweight are the two major health problems that miniature horses face:**

Obesity: Often people just don't see how fat their horse has become, and don't understand what a serious health problem it is. Basically, if you see any fat rolls on your horse, a crest over the neck, or too much covering over the hindquarters, they need to have their food intake reduced. The easiest ways of doing this is either by strip grazing, or if you have one, shutting them in a pen at night and letting them out during the day. Feeding muzzles can also be bought from saddlers. Very fat small horses can "founder", which is a serious, painful and potentially fatal condition.

Footcare: Horses need regular foot trimming. To reduce the frequency of how often they need doing I have paving stones down around their troughs, and also have paving stone pads in areas they walk around often. This helps wear their feet down, so that the farrier doesn't need to visit too often. Being walked on roads or gravel driveways also helps. This way, I only have to trim their feet every 3 months or so, sometimes even less. I trim my horses feet myself, and am happy to teach anyone who buys a mini off me how to trim their horses feet. However, if that isn't something you're confident doing, farriers are quite reasonable (\$20 - \$40 per trim).

**Worming:** Horses need regular worming. If nothing else, they should be wormed before winter (when animals can get rundown), and in spring, when parasitic worms are most active. Worming manufacturers state that horses need to be wormed every 6 weeks. If horses were in intensive grazing, with lots of other horses, on land that had been used for horses for years, this amount of worming would be appropriate. However, if rotational grazing, and cross-grazing is possible, and the stocking rate of the paddock is low, then times between can be longer.

\* rotational grazing: horses are moved from paddock to paddock. Empty paddock is "rested". As no worm eggs are being added to the pasture from the horse's faeces, the worm burden of the horse is reduced.

\* cross-grazing: We cross-graze our paddocks as much as possible. This is when other species of animals, like sheep, go into paddocks after horses have been grazing it. Some horse worms are killed when they enter another type of animal's gut, and again reduce the worm burden of horses using that paddock.

### Other worming information:

- Signs that horses need worming: "**starry coats**": This is when the horse's coat

is dull and dry. Instead of lying flat against the horse's body, it curves upwards.  
**"tail rubbing"**: Horses get itchy when they have worms. If you see them rubbing their tails against fences, then they need worming.

- Young horses and older horses have a greater need for regular worming.
- Never "underdose" your horse. If too little drench is given, the worms don't die, but also develop resistance to drench, so are harder to kill in the future.

Approximate Weights:

Put a tape measure completely around the "Girth" - the place where saddle goes:

76 cm = the horse is approx 45.5 kg

102 cm = the horse is approx 91 kg

116 cm = the horse is approx 136.5 kg

**Salt blocks are good for horses:** Horses have quite a high need for minerals in their diet. Salt blocks are the horse equivalent of a multivitamin pill, and providing one is very good for their general health and wellbeing

**Companionship:** Horses are herd animals, and get lonely on their own. Ideally they have another horse to keep them company. However, donkeys or goats, combined with regular human contact, are adequate substitutes.

**Rain scold:** Horses can get rainscold, which is basically dandruff that's irritated their skin. Wet humid weather can give them something called rainrash around their legs, which is very similar. Washing it with triocil, a medicated wash, will help fix it. I've found the quickest and easiest treatment is an ointment called pasternoint. Both products are available from your vet.

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