



# My Healthy Horse

Students will be able to compare and contrast the requirements for good human health and the responsibilities of horse owners for the health of their animals in their environments.



Welcome students to your farm and review all safety rules to ensure a great visit for them, the staff, and the horses.

Keeping horses healthy is a critical responsibility that horse owners must uphold. Ask students to list what they think are important aspects of good horse health and hygiene. Accept all answers and record their answers on a flip chart or white board.

Organize the list into the following categories:

- Proper Nutrition
- Proper Method of Feeding
- Supplements
- De-worming
- Yearly Vaccines
- Hoof Care
- Exercise
- Clean and Safe Stables & Stalls



Take students on a tour of your facility. Point out the places and activities mentioned above that indicate horses are being cared for and are healthy. If staff is available, conduct short interviews on the topic of horse health.

Compare aspects of horse health care that are similar to human health care, like a nutritious diet, getting plenty of exercise, and keeping a clean home. What are the risks to horses if health and hygiene are not maintained? What are the risks to humans if health and hygiene are neglected?



Introduce a horse, your equine educator. Review the rules behavior around and near horses.

What happens when students go to the doctor for a check-up? How do we measure the human heart rate? Invite students to take their own pulses and help them interpret the results. Demonstrate how to take a horse's pulse and explain how pulse rates are different and why. Invite students to try taking the pulse of the horse. How is normal resting pulse of the horse different that the normal resting pulse of a human? Why?

How can we estimate the weight of a horse? Describe girth and length measurements and invite students to calculate an estimation. Demonstrate how to take a horse's temperature. It's probably a good idea *not* to invite students to try this! Finally, demonstrate how to check the horse's hoof and invite students to give it a try on the front feet.



Divide students into groups of three or four. Introduce a volunteer or staff person to each group and assign each group a horse to care for. You will have pre-selected the horses/ponies for this activity that are calm and kid-friendly!)

With their staff leader, walk out to meet a horse, an equine educator. Carry a small bag with brushes, hoof pick, and any other small items needed for grooming and care. Spend some time caring for the horse from head to hoof.

Staff leaders can take their groups into stables and feed rooms. Have students help mix and measure feed for their horse. Examine a health chart and see that their horse is up-to-date on shots, exams, de-worming, and hoof care. Discuss with students the kinds of professionals who assist with horse health, especially the equine veterinarians and farrier!

Clean a horse's stall. Have mucking tools and fresh bedding available for students to freshen up their horse's stable area. Students with allergies can be given other maintenance tasks that don't stir up dust or dander. Calculate the time it took to accomplish all the tasks for a day's care for their horse. Discuss the commitment needed by an owner or boarding stable worker to ensure the health of each horse in their care.



Gather all students together to evaluate their horse health experience. Offer examples of health problems that might arise while owning a horse. Ask students what could be done to prevent or address certain problems.

Invite students to come back for sessions on equine veterinary and the work farriers do to support horse health - the lessons following *The Healthy Horse*). Promote lessons, trail rides, and other activities available for students new to equine recreation and sport.

## Health and Work Connections

Caring for the health of animals or people involves physical work. As staff and volunteers guide students to care for a horse, encourage the appreciation of manual labor and good work ethic as integral to ensuring good health for both the animal and his caretaker.

Demonstrate what good work ethic looks like. When is a job done? Who decides if the job is done correctly and to the best ability of the caretaker? Often it is the caretaker who determines when a job is complete, but how can staff and volunteers instill in students that *a job well done* is the ultimate goal? In this age of distracted work that competes with other activities (including smart phones) routine jobs that involve the health and care of animals need extra attention. As mentors to students, instill good work ethic and pride in physical work done well.