

Vital Signs of the Horse

Vital Sign	Normal	Alert	Emergency
Heart Rate	26-40 beats per minute 44-48 is a high normal if it's hot outside	48 beats per minute or higher indicates pain; call your veterinarian.	60 beats per minute and higher is a medical emergency; get veterinary care for your horse immediately.
Respiratory Rate	8 to 15 breaths per minute	Over 15 breaths per minute signals distress; call your veterinarian.	The horse who takes more than 15 breaths per minute and has other abnormal vital signs needs immediate medical care.
Gut Sounds	A low rumbling wave of sound every 30 to 60 seconds	Call your veterinarian if the horse has loud, nearly continuous rumbling noises or very few gut sounds.	No gut sounds on either side of the horse's belly is a medical emergency, get veterinary care immediately.
Gum Color	Light pink to a reddish pink		Get veterinary help immediately if your horse has gums that are pale with a whitish bluish almost purple color or gums that are a flushed brick red color.
Capillary Refill	Press the tip of your thumb into the horse's upper gum for several seconds. When you release your finger pressure, capillary refill is normal if the color returns to the gums within one to two seconds.	Capillary refill is slow if the color does not return for two seconds or longer. This is cause for concern, call your veterinarian.	Capillary refill is very slow if the color does not return for four seconds or longer. Get veterinary care immediately.
Rectal Temperature	99.5 degrees to 100.5 degrees Each horse has their own "normal" temperature within this range.	Call your veterinarian if your horse's temperature is 101 degrees or higher.	Get veterinary help immediately if your horse has a temperature of 103 degrees or higher.
Daily Basics of Horse Health	<p>Water: A 1,000-pound horse should drink seven to eight gallons of water each day, more during hot weather.</p> <p>Food: A 1,000-pound horse should eat 15 to 25 pounds of hay or grass per day. This amount is 1.5% to 2.5% of his body weight.</p> <p>Manure: A horse should pass eight to 12 formed bowel movements each day.</p> <p>Urine: Normal urine is clear yellow in color</p>	<p>Call your veterinarian if your horse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ drinks less or considerably more than normal ◆ doesn't eat a normal amount of hay or eats constantly and acts hungry ◆ doesn't pass the baseline amount of manure ◆ passes urine that is without color, cloudy or dark 	Get veterinary care for your horse immediately if the horse stops drinking, eating, passing manure or urinating.

Increase Your Awareness of Your Horse's Vital Signs

A horse's vital signs reflect the state of his physical and emotional health. When a veterinarian attends a sick or injured horse, he measures the vital signs in order to evaluate the situation. You can use these signs to monitor your horse's health and illness as well.

Note: *Within the range of the normal values that are listed above, your horse will have her own specific readings that shift slightly throughout each day. To find out what your horse's normals are, take the vital signs several times during the day for several days in a row and record the readings.*