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ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF IOWA, INC.

How to Love Your Horse

Basic Care Guidelines

From the Animal Rescue League of Iowa and the Humane Society of the United States

Are you interested in experiencing the joys of horse ownership? While sharing your life with a horse can be a rewarding experience, it also means accepting the responsibility of caring for your equine companion for life. Here are some general guidelines for caring for horses:



- Even routine horse care is a significant and ongoing expense. In fact, the cost of purchasing a horse is often much less than the cost of maintaining one for a year. Make sure you are realistic about your ability to afford quality care before you adopt an equine companion.
- Horses need a regular supply of food. In most cases, they need to have hay or pasture throughout the day, with additional grain feedings as needed. An average-size horse will eat about 20 lbs. of food a day and drink at least eight gallons of water. Because their stomachs are relatively small and their digestive systems surprisingly delicate, horses need to nibble or graze throughout the day, rather than have one or two meals a day.
- Horses need regular hoof care. Plan to hire a farrier every six to eight weeks for routine hoof trimming or shoeing.
- Horses need regular veterinary care. At least once a year, your horse will need to be vaccinated against tetanus and other diseases. The veterinarian will also provide routine dental care. Keep in mind that medical emergencies, which are always an unfortunate possibility, can cost several thousand dollars to treat.
- Since horses are constantly exposed to intestinal worms from the ground they graze on, they must be wormed according to vet recommendations. Carrying a heavy burden of worms can cause serious illness or death in equines, so regular and timely treatment is crucial to your horse's health.
- Horses need constant access to a dry, safe, comfortable shelter to protect them from rain, wind, and snow. In warm and sunny weather, the shelter you supply will provide your companion with shade. At a minimum, you should have a well-constructed, three-sided shed into which your horse can retreat at all times. You will need to remove manure from the stall or shelter every day.
- Horses need exercise. To supplement the exercise your horse will get when you ride him, he should have a paddock or pasture in which to relax and stroll. No horse should spend all day confined in a stall, except on a veterinarian's recommendation. The pasture should be bordered by safe, sturdy fencing that will keep the horse safe and secure. Barbed wire is not an acceptable fencing material it has been the cause of many serious injuries.

Your horse depends on your love, care, and commitment. You'll show your love through grooming, petting, riding, and the occasional treat. You must also show your commitment by providing for her needs 365 days a year, in good weather and bad. With good care, your horse can live 35 years or more, so plan to enjoy a long and mutually rewarding relationship with your horse.