



# focus

## on first aid

### Horse MOT

In order to determine when your horse is unwell it is first necessary to observe them when they are fit and healthy.

It is good practice to keep a record of the resting pulse, temperature and respiratory rate for your horse as this will help to identify when they are unwell.

The 'normal' vital signs for a resting horse are:

Temperature	36.5 - 38°C
Pulse	30 - 40 beats/min
Respiration	8 - 12 breaths/min

Any deviation to these 'norms' may indicate that your horse is unwell, particularly if any combination of two of these signs are abnormal e.g. increased pulse and high temperature.



### Signs of good health

- Pricked ears
- Alert eyes
- Weight distributed evenly on all four feet, though a hind leg may be resting
- Good appetite
- Regular passing of droppings and urine
- Clean and shiny skin and coat

A key indicator that something is wrong is a change in your horse's usual behaviour.



## How to take a...



### Temperature

The temperature can be taken with either a digital or mercury thermometer.

Care should be taken when doing this as a horse may kick out so ideally the horse should be held by an assistant.

Stand to one side of your horse and, holding the tail, insert a lubricated thermometer into the rectum, holding it to one side so it sits against the rectal wall. Hold it there for one minute before removing it and reading the temperature.



### Pulse

It is worth practising to take your horse's pulse, both so you become familiar with doing so and your horse becomes used to it.

The most common place to take the pulse is just where the facial artery passes under the lower jaw.

A light pressure applied over the artery with two fingers should allow you to locate the pulse. Once located, count the beats for 15 seconds, then multiply by 4.



### Respiration

The respiration rate can be observed by watching the side of the horse behind the last rib.

Watch the side move in and out as the horse breathes and count how many times it does this in a minute.

Alternatively you can watch the nostrils or place a hand in front of the nostril to feel the air as the horse breathes out.

### Coping in an emergency

While every case is different, how you act in an emergency will have a significant impact on the outcome of the situation so the best advice has to be: Keep Calm and Carry On.

### When to call the vet?

If your horse is distressed, appears to be in considerable pain or is in a potentially life threatening situation you should call the vet immediately as every minute counts. The severity of some situations can be more difficult to assess. In these instances, watch carefully and if your horse's condition is either not improving or deteriorating then once again, you must call the vet. It is important to note that the extent and cost of treatment is likely to be significantly lower if the horse is treated immediately than if the condition is allowed to deteriorate. Most vets will be happy to talk to you on the phone about your horse's condition and advise if they think a visit is necessary, so if you're not sure it's worth calling the vet for advice.



**The vet might ask about your horses vital signs, having recorded a "norm" for your horse you will be able to explain the horses current condition and what's normal for him to the vet.**