

# VITAL SIGNS

Taken from Horse & Rider February 2009 and The United States Pony Club Manual of Horsemanship, C Level © 1995

What you'll need:

- Digital, instant-read thermometer (about \$10 at variety/drug stores)
- KY or petroleum jelly (about \$2-\$5 at drug stores, used to lubricate thermometer tip)
- Stethoscope (about \$10+ via vet supply catalog)
- Watch or timer, with a second hand or a digital timer.

The How to's:

## Take a Temperature

Activate digital thermometer, dab tip with lubricant, gently insert tip in horse's anus to a depth of 2 inches, hold in place until it beeps to indicate reading is complete or for two minutes.

NORMAL RANGE: 99° to 101.5°

## Take a Pulse

Place stethoscope bell behind the point of your horse's left elbow, press into "armpit" there. Count each "lub-dub" you'll hear as one beat for 15 seconds, using a watch/timer. If you don't have a stethoscope find the location of facial artery inside lower jaw. Multiply by four to determine beats per minute (bpm).

NORMAL RANGE: 30 to 44 bpm

## Take Respiration Rate

Place stethoscope bell on center of your horse's throat 6 to 8 inches below the throatlatch to listen for breaths, or watch nostril flares or rise/fall of ribcage/flank. Count number of breaths taken in a 15 second period. Multiply by four to determine breaths per minute (bpm).

NORMAL RANGE: 10 to 15 bpm

## Take Capillary Refill time (crt):

Lift your horse's upper lip, press your thumb on the gums hard enough to blanch out the color. Remove your thumb and count how many seconds it takes the gums to resume normal color.

NORMAL RANGE: 1 to 2 seconds

## Take Gut Sounds

Mentally divide your horse's abdomen into five segments, high flank, low flank, high belly (between flank and ribs), low belly and lower belly (near the belly's midline). Press the stethoscope bell onto each section on both sides of your horse and listen for at least 30 seconds (the longer the better).

NORMAL RANGE: Long, rolling rumbles intersperse with short gurgles; quiet periods that last no longer than 2 minutes.