

Taking Horse Vitals

Temperature

Normal range is 98 degrees Fahrenheit to 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

Temperature is normally taken with a rectal thermometer.

Temperature may vary 2 or 3 degrees due to recent exercise or high ambient temperatures.

95 degrees is approaching shock conditions.

Pulse

Pulse is measured in beats per minute.

38-40 bpm is the resting heart rate for an adult horse.

The Horse Anatomy Coloring Book, Plate 62 diagrams different places to take a horse's pulse.

Equine pulses are taken with your fingers so as to avoid confusing the horse's pulse count with the strong pulse count of the human thumb.

Equine pulse locations:

1. Under the eye on the transverse facial artery.
2. On the lower hind leg at the lateral, dorsal metatarsal artery.
3. On the long pastern bone of the foreleg at the digital arteries.
4. On the inside of the jaw.

Respiration

The respiration rate is measured in breaths per minute.

In and out equals one breath.

8-15 breaths per minute is normal for a horse.

The breath rate of foals is higher.

Capillary Refill

Lift the horse's upper lip and check the color off the gums;

Pink is healthy tissue.

Gray means the horse is experiencing severe shock.

Yellow is liver disease.

Pale white means blood loss.

Bright red indicates endotoxemia.

Blue means the horse is experiencing a lack of oxygen in his tissues.

Press on the gums and release. The color should return in two seconds.

Hydration of Tissue

Pinch some tissue in a loose area of skin so that it forms a pup tent.

When the horse is well hydrated the pup tent will normalize in about two seconds.

When the horse is dehydrated it will take longer to disappear.