

# THE 6 VITAL SIGNS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR HORSE

## YOU WILL LEARN

The horse's normal  
temperature range

How to check your  
horse's pulse rate

How to tell if your  
horse is dehydrated

# IS MY HORSE SICK?

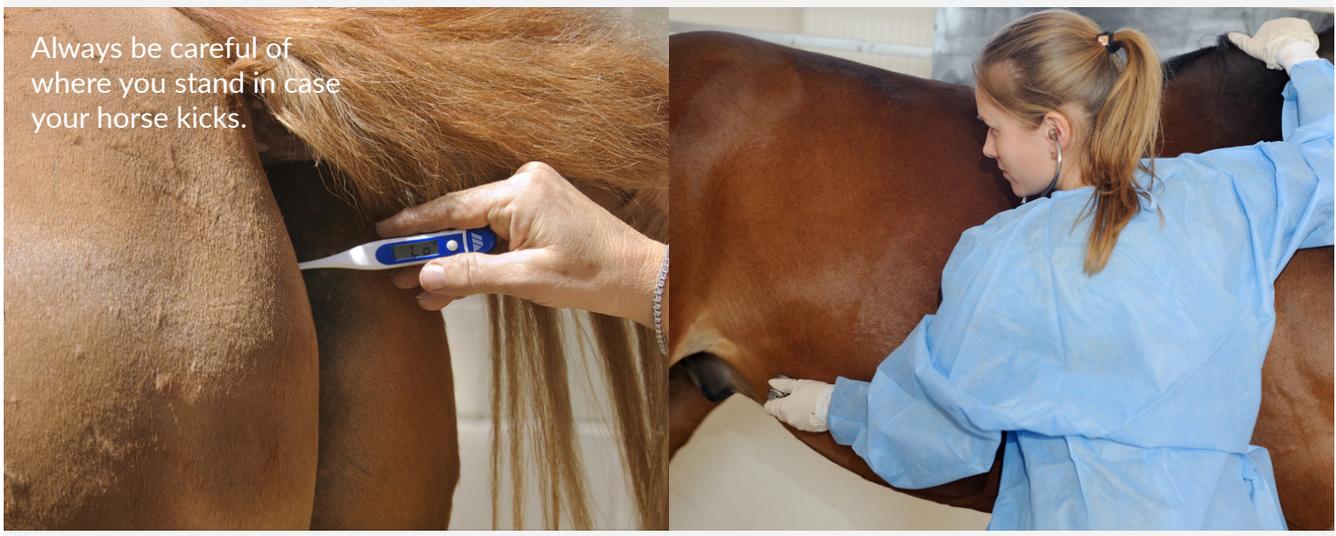
## The six vital signs you need to know about your horse.

### 1 Temperature 37.5 - 38.5 degrees celcius

Horses can have their temperature taken using a digital thermometer. Gently insert the tip into their rectum and wait until you hear the thermometer beep. Pain, infection, exercise and stress can all raise temperatures; results should be evaluated taking into account all parameters.

### 2 Pulse 32 - 40 beats per minute

Checking your horse's pulse can be done using a stethoscope on their left side at the level of the elbow. Listen for 15 seconds and then multiply your count by four. Alternatively, you can feel for their pulse under their jaw or on either side of their fetlock. However, this is often subtle and requires practice.



### 3 Respiration 8 - 20 breaths per minute

By watching your horse's nostril and ribcage movement, you can count their breaths over one minute. One inhale and one exhale are counted as one breath. The rate should be counted with your horse standing quietly, not whilst they are moving as this can falsely influence your count.

### 4 Gut Sounds Low grade gurgling sounds

Your horse should normally have low grade gurgling noises; audible on both sides of their body. To listen, gently press your ear to their stomach, just behind the last rib and listen for at least 30 seconds. Absence of gut sounds is always concerning.

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### Capillary Refill Time

1 - 2 seconds

Normal, healthy horses should have light pink gums. To check your horse's capillary refill time, lift their upper lip and firmly press your finger against the gum to create a white mark. Once you lift your finger, the pink colour should return within 1 -2 seconds.

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### Dehydration

1 -2 seconds

The average sized horse needs to drink a minimum of 20L of water per day. In very hot weather or following heavy exercise, some horses can drink up to 70L per day. By gently pinching the skin of your horse's neck and timing how long it takes to flatten, you can estimate your horse's hydration status. Normally, the skin should flatten within 1-2 seconds.



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## DR LOUISE COSGROVE

Having spent most of her childhood in the saddle, it was a natural transition into equine veterinary medicine for Louise, founder of Exclusively Equine Veterinary Services and HorseBarn Education. A practicing equine vet, Louise is passionate about empowering horse owners, like you, with a deeper understanding of horse health, so you can give your horse a longer, healthier future.

**If you have any questions regarding your horse, you're welcome to contact me personally.**

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