

Adult Horse or Pony Average Resting Temperature

37.5 to 38.5 C or 99 to 101 F

Remember: it will fall within a range and it is important to know what is normal for your horse.
 Take a resting temperature at the same time each day to calculate an average.

Celsius range: 37.5 to 38.5 (notice there is really only a 1 degree range)

Fahrenheit range: 99 to 101

Celsius	37	37.5	38	38.5	<u>39</u>	<u>39.5</u>
Fahrenheit	98.6	99.5	100.4	101.3	<u>102.2</u>	<u>103.1</u>

To convert C to F= $(Cx9/5)+32$

example: **37** x 9 = 333. Divide by 5: $333/5=66.6$. Now add 32: $66.6 + 32 = \mathbf{98.6} \text{ F}$

To convert F to C= $(F-32) \times 5/9$

example: **98.6** - 32 = 66.6. Multiply by 5: $66.6 \times 5 = 333$. Now divide by 9: $333/9 = \mathbf{37} \text{ C}$

How to take a temperature safely

- 1) Use a rubber tipped digital thermometer for safety and ease
- 2) Lubricate with Vaseline/KY gel
- 3) Stand to side of horse to prevent being kicked (if this is the first time you have taken the horses temp, best to have a holder control the horse on the same side as you and stand the horse with its opposite side against a wall. Take your time)
- 4) Push the tail to the side away from you and use other hand to insert thermometer slowly with slight twisting movement.
- 5) Hold thermometer to the sidewall of the bottom until it “beeps” and read immediately
- 6) Wipe the thermometer clean and be aware that sometimes using the thermometer will stimulate the horse to poop. Wait until they have finished and then take temp. If the thermometer is in poop it will show a false, lower reading
- 7) Please be gentle and practice at home to allow your horse to become comfortable. This is an important skill to learn and will help you assess your horse early for any signs of illness

Factors directly affecting temperature

- Recent exercise - always repeat reading after cooling the horse. The temp should drop to normal within 10-15 mins if cooling is performed properly.
- Excitement or nervousness will cause increased temp but should still be within normal range
- Pain or illness will also raise temp, this is why it is important to know what is normal for your horse.

- Recent travel on horse box or trailer, a rugged horse or animal with full coat in unseasonably warm weather
- Hot and humid weather.
- User error. Old batteries

Adult Horse or Pony Average Resting Pulse Rate
30 to 40 beats per minute

Remember: there is a subtle difference between pulse and heart rate but for ease we will consider them to be the same.

Heart rate can be taken at the area of chest wall on the inside of left elbow
 Pulse rate can be taken from multiple places, the easiest and safest are the:

- artery on the inside of the lower jaw (mandible)
- artery on either side of the fetlock (digital pulse used to assess for laminitis)
- artery on the inside of the knee (below the chestnut)

How to take a pulse/heart rate safely

1. Use only finger tips and start with light pressure then increase if pulse is not felt
2. If taking pulse at knee or lower, keep spare hand on horses' body and head/eyes facing forward to prevent accidents. Never kneel!
3. Count the beats for just 15 seconds and then multiply by 4 to get BPM
4. Unlike a vein, the arteries have thick walls and are often easy to see
5. A stethoscope can be used to listen to the heart rate but is not necessary since the heart rate can be felt easily.
6. The pulse rate and heart rate should be rhythmic, if not call your vet.

Factors directly affecting Pulse (mainly cause increased pulse rate)

- Excitement or nervousness
- Raised temperature
- Size and age (larger animals tend to have lower pulse rates)
- Recent exercise will cause increase but should return to normal.
- Pain or illness can cause either increase or decrease to pulse rate
- User error, using thumbs, pressing too firmly or too softly

If unsure **repeat the reading**, remember you will take all values of TPR into account before making an assessment of health

Adult Horse or Pony Average Resting Respiration Rate **10 to 24 breaths per minute**

Remember: Horses only breath from the nose. The respiration is the easiest to monitor and a very important indicator for health. Take note of any coughing or nasal discharge and when this occurred (before or after exercise)

How to take the Respiration rate safely

1. Can be performed without touching the horse, from a distance or standing at either side of the horse
2. Remove any rugs or sheets, you do not need to remove tack.
3. On cold days you can watch for breath coming from nostrils BUT this will only give you the rate and not indicate any effort being used
4. Stand at the horse's shoulder at arm's length from the horse and watch the widest part of the ribcage (just in-front of the hind leg) For safety stand at the shoulder but you can get a good view when looking from the hind end toward the front.
5. You should be able to see the ribcage raise and fall (count a rise and fall as one breath)
6. It is normal to see a mix of both deep and shallow breaths when at rest
7. If the horse is excitable and breathing hard from obvious recent exercise, it is safest to stay at the head to count. The breaths will be obvious by watching the nostrils flare.
8. If you have a calm rugged or very hairy horse and find it difficult to see the ribcage movement, it is possible to hold the back of a bare hand just below the nostril and feel the breaths. Keep your hand far enough away to not touch the whiskers.

Factors directly affecting the Respiration rate

- Do not expect the respiration rate to be as rhythmic as the pulse. It is normal to see deep and shallow breaths.
- Exercise will increase breathing rate. It is important to monitor for effort by watching how wide the ribcage expands and how much the belly moves up or out.
- Exercising in Hot and humid weather and exercising an overweight unfit horse.
- Coughing can be an indicator of lung disease or temporary irritation; it is best to have your vet assess if you hear any coughing.
- Keep a note when the horse coughs and note any discharge (a slight clear watery discharge can be normal but a thick coloured mucus or blood is not)
- Illness will often cause increase in temperature and therefore increased respiration rate.
- An excited/nervous horse or a horse whinnying will make counting respiration rate very difficult