LLUEST

Care Of The Aging Horse and Pony

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Common Health problems in the older horse

- Weight loss
- Dental disease
- Arthritis and Osteoarthritis
- Liver & Kidney Issues
- Cancer of the skin and/or internal organs.
- Reduced Immune function
- Cushing's (PPID)
- Colic
- Cataracts

WITH ADVANCES IN VETERINARY MEDICINE AND KNOWLEDGE, HORSES LIKE HUMANS ARE NOW LIVING LONGER. MANY HORSES AND PONIES THAT HAVE HAD GOOD WELFARE THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES, ARE NOW REMAINING HEALTHY AND ACTIVE WELL IN TO THEIR 20'S AND 30'S.

Diet and Nutrition

Taking care of elderly ponies can take a lot of time and expense, especially if they have other health issues. Ensuring they have the appropriate amount of forage and fibre, whilst avoiding them going for long periods without eating, can be a real challenge.

Horses and ponies are natural grazers and have been designed to eat for 18 hours a day in the wild. They would also cover anything from 5 miles right up to as far as 34 miles in a day depending on the number of water sources and quality of grazing available. Their digestive system has evolved to cope with a fibre-based diet. A horse's natural diet includes a variety of grasses of different types and age, in addition they will seek out herbs and some weeds. Some elderly ponies can manage to chew grass, but not manage hay, meaning winter can be a challenging time, especially for those owners and keepers with limited availability of land to put aside adequate grazing for winter. A horse or pony shouldn't go any longer than 4-6 hours without eating. As our equine friends advance in age and their dental health deteriorates, it is our legal and moral responsibility as owners and keepers to ensure their changing dietary needs are met.

Routine Health & Care

- Routine dental check 6-12 months
- Annual Vaccinations
- Effective targeted worming plan including Faecal worm egg counts
- Screening for PPID
- Regular Health Checks
- Regular farriery
- Correct diet and nutrition
- Weigh Tape and body condition score fortnightly

Top Tips

- Keep your horse or pony turned out as much as possible to help prevent stiffness
- To maintain body condition, feed at least 1.5% (before soaking) of body weight in fibre based feeds and forage replacer.
- For weight gain, feed an overall 2.5% (before soaking) of body weight in fibre based feeds and forage replacers.
- Divide the daily required quantities, into smaller portions throughout the day
- Speak to your feed companies nutritionist for advice.
- Try feeding a balancer instead of mix to ensure your horse or pony is receiving the correct amount of vitamins and minerals.
- Start rugging your horse or pony in Autumn to keep them warm and help prevent weight loss.