



# Horse 4 Life

## H4L Basic Health Indicators

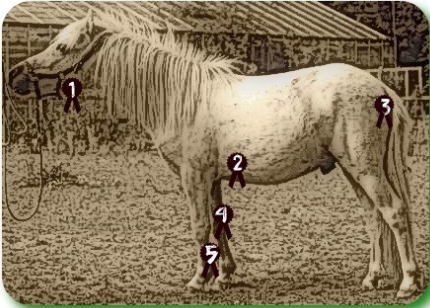
Horse 4 Life is committed to promoting the health and safety of all equines and their owners/riders. Further information is available by contacting Horse 4 Life – please see [www.horse4life.org](http://www.horse4life.org) for details.

Check your equine's normal vital signs several times and over several days to give you a comparison. By conditioning your equine to be comfortable with this kind of handling, he/she will be more tolerant if poorly or in pain. This guide cannot be used for diagnosis, but will help you to assess the need for professional veterinary advice – it can also help to give the Vet more insight into your equine's condition!

### Temperature

Temperatures are taken rectally using a digital thermometer. In the average healthy adult equine, the temperature range is 36.9°C to 38.3°C. It is a good idea to attach some string or a clip to the thermometer – just in case it disappears!

### Pulse



Use your index and middle fingers to feel the pulse – your thumb has a pulse point and it is easy to mistake whose pulse you are feeling!

1. Under the top of the lower jaw – easiest and most commonly used pulse point;
2. Behind the left elbow – place whole hand on area to feel the heart rate;
3. Under the tail bone, slightly to the side;
4. Below the chestnut;
5. Slightly below inside knee joint.

*Excitement and exercise will naturally increase the heart/pulse rate, so rest your equine before taking his/her pulse.  
The following should only be used as a guide:*

**FOAL:** 70 – 120 beats per minute

**YEARLING:** 46 – 60 beats per minute

**2 YR OLD:** 40 – 50 beats per minute

**ADULT:** 28 – 40 beats per minute

### Respiration

Stand slightly to the side at your equine's tail end and count the rise and fall of the rib cage. The average healthy adult equine will have a rested respiration rate of between 8 and 16 breaths per minute. *N.B. Placing your hand in front of the nostrils to feel the breaths will encourage your equine to 'sniff' your hand – giving a false indication of the respiration rate.*

### Mucous Membranes

Healthy equines have pink mucous membranes. Common places to check are the gums, inside the nostrils, and the inner eyelids. Pale/white, grey/blue, bright red or yellowing mucous membranes indicate a requirement for professional (vet) advice. Lifting the upper lip and pressing your finger on the gum just above the teeth will cause the area to turn white. Upon removing the pressure, the pink should return within 2 seconds. This is known as the Capillary Refill Time (CRT).

### Hydration

With your equine's neck straight, pinch the flesh between finger and thumb (not too hard), and lift away from the body. Release and count how long it takes for the skin to return to normal – no more than 2 seconds in a well hydrated equine. Be aware that elderly and underweight horses may have looser skin, and therefore the Skin Turgor Test should be performed on an area where the flesh is taut.

### General awareness

Be aware of any changes in your equine's usual behaviour, mood, eating and toiletry habits. Whilst changes may not necessarily indicate illness, stress or discomfort, it can be an early warning!

**Information Disclaimer: Horse 4 Life data sheets are for general guidance purposes only and Horse 4 Life give no assurance or warranty regarding the accuracy of content. This data sheet is therefore not to be considered as a substitute for qualified professional advice.**