

# VITAL SIGNS AND HORSE HEALTH INDICATORS

## Capillary refill time

Lift your horse's upper lip and press your thumb firmly against his gums for 2 seconds. The white mark left by your finger should turn pink in 1–2 seconds.

Delayed capillary refill time is an indication of reduced blood circulation due to reduced volume (blood loss or dehydration) and/or decreased blood pressure (shock).

*These vital signs are for an unstressed horse at rest, under normal circumstances. Learn your horse's resting vitals when he is calm and healthy so that you will be able to recognize when they are abnormal. Consult with your veterinarian if your horse's vital signs are outside his normal ranges.*

## Lameness scale

- 1 Lameness is difficult to detect under any conditions.
- 2 Still difficult to see at walk or trot but more obvious under certain conditions, such as under saddle, when turning, on harder ground.
- 3 Detectable at the trot under all circumstances.
- 4 Obvious at the walk.
- 5 Horse is unable or unwilling to walk or bear weight on a leg.

## Identifying the affected limb

Head bobbing = front-end lameness; horse's head will be at highest point when affected leg is hitting the ground.

Upward hip hike = hind-end lameness; the hip will move upward as affected limb hits the ground.

## Gum Color Health Indicator

Normal

Contact Your Veterinarian

salmon/pink    pinkish white    bluish white    brick red    yellowish



## Hydration

Gently pinch the skin on your horse's neck. If the skin does not flatten back in 1 second after you release it, your horse could be dehydrated.

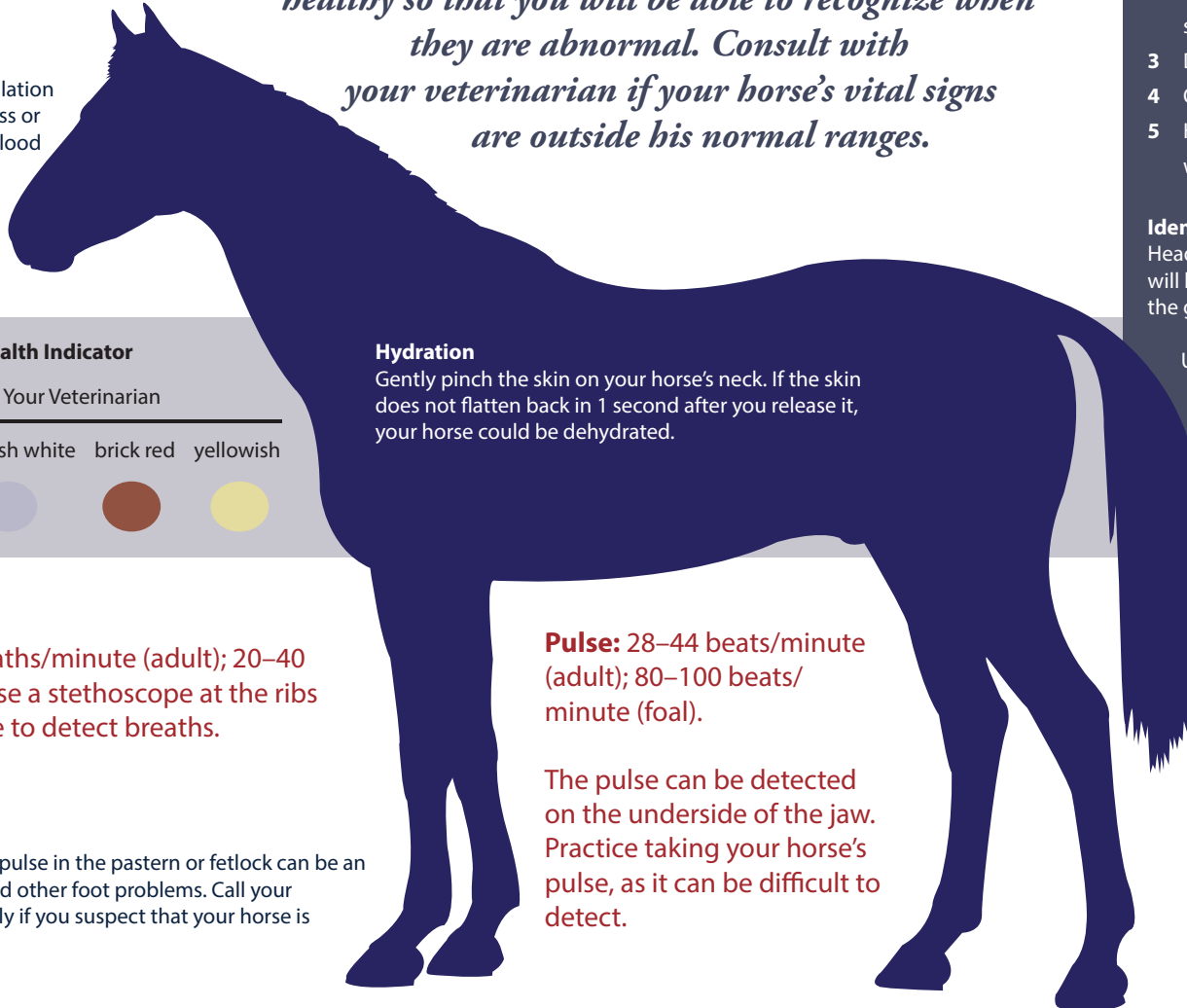
**Respiration:** 10–24 breaths/minute (adult); 20–40 breaths/minute (foal). Use a stethoscope at the ribs or your hand at the nose to detect breaths.

## Digital pulse

A strong or "bounding" pulse in the pastern or fetlock can be an indicator of laminitis and other foot problems. Call your veterinarian immediately if you suspect that your horse is developing laminitis.

**Pulse:** 28–44 beats/minute (adult); 80–100 beats/minute (foal).

The pulse can be detected on the underside of the jaw. Practice taking your horse's pulse, as it can be difficult to detect.



**Temperature:** 99–101°F (adult); 99.5–102.1°F (foal). Always take a horse's temperature rectally.

# HAGYARD

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