



EQUINE1 2070

Responsible care of horses

People keep horses for a number of reasons. Many simply ride horses for pleasure while others use horses in ranch or farm settings, show horses and/or breed horses. People who keep horses may also have particular career goals, such as training to become an animal care technician or veterinarian.

There are many benefits and choices that come from involvement with horses. Equine activities can encourage an active way of life and promote both physical and emotional wellness. The activities involved in providing care for a horse, as well as those involved in working, riding, showing or breeding horses, can encourage physical fitness and even stress reduction! However, there are also responsibilities that come from involvement with horses.

All horse owners and handlers are responsible for the humane care of their animals.

STANDARDS OF CARE

While there are a variety of opinions regarding best care for horses, there are some absolute rules that must be followed. Knowledge of horses' needs has increased in recent years and more scientific methods that identify ways to meet those needs have been developed.

Best practices are exemplified in Codes of Practice, which are recommended standards of care prepared by committees of scientists, veterinarians and other animal experts. Conversely, practices that do not meet the basic minimum needs of animals are liable to persecution under provincial or federal legislation.



DO YOU KNOW

that there are more than 54 000 stables in Canada that house more than 461 000 horses?

Learning to control and care for an animal much larger than yourself can have a profound effect on your confidence and is a great feeling:

- Improved self-confidence
- Improved assessment abilities
- Development of patience
- Improved emotional control and self-discipline
- Improved expansion of locus of control
- Development of respect and care for animals.

All About Horses Activity Book: Equine Canada. www.equinecanada.ca/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=4895&Itemid=365&lang=en

PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS

All Canadian provinces and territories have animal protection laws. These laws all deal with animal welfare issues and animal protection. However, they vary in a number of ways:

- The level of protection they provide for animals
- The issues that are addressed
- The degree to which the laws are enforced
- Who is responsible for enforcing the laws.

Animal protection is also covered by the animal cruelty section of Canada's *Criminal Code*. In some provinces or territories, these laws overlap. Some offenses that are illegal in provincial and territorial laws are also criminal in the *Criminal Code*. This means that enforcement officials can lay charges under provincial or territorial law, the *Criminal Code*, or both.

ENFORCEMENT IN ALBERTA

The Alberta SPCA's Peace Officers are entrusted to enforce the *Animal Protection Act* and other legislation involving the welfare of livestock and companion animals in rural areas throughout Alberta. In response to reports of suspected animal abuse and neglect, Peace Officers travel throughout the province to help ensure that all animals are treated humanely.

Inspections

Peace Officers conduct inspections at auction markets, riding stables, kennels, rodeos and other animal holding and handling facilities.

Investigating Abuse

The Alberta SPCA relies on the public to let them know about any domestic animal abuse or neglect. Alberta SPCA Peace Officers investigate all complaints received about animals in distress. The *Animal Protection Act* requires there to be reasonable and probable grounds to believe there may be an offence. A call from a witness or neighbour provides such grounds for investigation



LINK

The Alberta SPCA provides contact information for reporting animal neglect and abuse.

- Outside Calgary and Edmonton, call the Alberta SPCA at 1-800-455-9003
- In Calgary, call the Calgary Humane Society at 403-205-4455
- In Edmonton, call the Edmonton Humane Society at 780-491-3517



DO YOU KNOW

In addition to federal and provincial laws, voluntary Codes of Practice are a series of nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of different types of farm animals. The Codes cover housing and management practices for animals on farms as well as best practices for their transportation and processing.

The Codes are not legislated; they are voluntary. They contain requirements from current legislation. They also contain recommendations to help farmers and others in the agriculture and food sector understand requirements for different aspects of animal care and practise sound animal husbandry.

Examples from different Codes of Practice are referenced on many of the **Need to Know** cards on the *Virtual Apprentice 2070* website.



LINK

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines has been reviewed and revised in 2013. The Code development process, supporting scientific research and the Code of Practice document can be accessed on the National Farm Animal Care Council website at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine.



What does the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines say about owner's and handler's duty of care?

Horses, donkeys, and mules can live for 30 years or longer. Ownership of these animals can be a great pleasure, but it is also a significant responsibility associated with a long-term commitment of time and money. Owners and staff have a duty of care for the animals they are permanently or temporarily responsible for. A parent or guardian of a minor needs to take responsibility for any animal that is owned or cared for by the minor. If an owner leaves the animal in the care of another person, it is the owner's duty to ensure the person is competent and has the necessary authority to act in an emergency. In this case, it may be advisable to have a written boarding contract in place.

Responsibility for an animal includes having an understanding of their specific health and welfare needs, and having the appropriate knowledge and skills to care for the animal. Those responsible will also have to comply with relevant legislation and be aware of the requirements and recommended practices in this Code. They should also know when to seek advice from a knowledgeable person.



LINK

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines provides a *Template Budget for Horse Ownership*. This template can be accessed in Appendix A of the Code at www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/equine_code_of_practice.pdf.

Pre-purchase considerations

Before buying or agreeing to become responsible for a horse, consider the following:

- **What are the costs?** The costs vary but can be substantial. The cost of purchasing a horse will be less than the ongoing costs associated with its care.
- **What type of horse is appropriate?** In the context of your skill level and intended use for the horse, evaluate what breed, sex, age, level of training and temperament will be most appropriate. Children and novice owners may benefit from buying a horse that is already well trained or that has experience in their intended discipline.
- **How much time is needed?** Consider the time commitment for daily care (e.g., grooming, feeding, mucking out) along with non-daily tasks (e.g., veterinary visits, stable maintenance and hoof care).
- **How and where will the horse be kept?** Suitable off-site accommodation needs to be available unless there is suitable accommodation on the home property.
- **What skills and knowledge are required?** All persons responsible for horses **must** have good working knowledge of their feed and water requirements, stable maintenance, signs of ill health, humane handling and common horse injuries.
- **What contingency plans should be made?** A simple plan may involve identifying capable persons who can look after the horse should you be temporarily or permanently unable to care for the animal. Another aspect of horse ownership is planning for the time when you may want or need to bring your ownership of a horse to an end.

The following **requirements** are identified in the Code of Practice.

Owners must have the resources for and knowledge of the basics of care as stated in this Code and ensure such care is provided.

Principal caregivers must be familiar with and provide the basics of care as stated in this Code.



These **recommended practices** are also identified in the Code of Practice.

- a. Gain experience in horse care prior to ownership (e.g., volunteer work, riding stables, Horse Clubs).
- b. Develop a budget that includes short- and long-term costs to ensure you are financially capable of caring for the horse.
- c. View a prospective horse with an experienced horseperson.
- d. Try the horse in all aspects of work the horse will be expected to perform.
- e. Find an experienced horseperson to provide ongoing advice for horse care.
- f. Participate in continuing education opportunities (e.g., hands-on horse clinics, conferences, webinars).

Excerpts from the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines* (©2013) have been used with permission, Equine Canada and the National Farm Animal Care Council. www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/equine_code_of_practice.pdf

The process for the development of Codes can be accessed through the National Farm Animal Care Council at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice.

1. Select between **three and six** of the questions on the Grid below. Provide a response to the questions you select. You may choose to focus only on the questions for one type of horse – pleasure, companionship, performance or breeding. A blank Grid template is also provided on the *Virtual Apprentice 2070* website at www.ctsanimals.ca/va2070/overview.html.



Include this grid analysis in your portfolio.

How are horses used for pleasure or recreation?	What are two benefits of riding horses for pleasure?	What is one benefit that results from meeting the responsibilities of horse ownership?
What are companionship horses?	When are horses used for companionship?	What are two important benefits of companionship horses?
What are performance horses?	What is one specialized need that performance horses have?	What are two important benefits of raising or owning a performance horse?
What do horse breeders do?	What are the benefits of keeping horses for breeding?	What is one important responsibility that horse breeders have for their horses?

2. Do an Internet research to find out about issues related to horse ownership, using search terms such as:

- Current Canada animal welfare issues
- Animal care issues Canada
- Horse welfare issues Canada.

Alternatively, identify an issue more specifically related to horse welfare on a website such as Equine Canada, at www.equinecanada.ca, or the Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada, at www.horsewelfare.ca.



You may have already completed these activities in *Virtual Apprentice 2020*. Go to the Stable and find your work from the **Animal Issues & Protection Need to Do** card. You can access this card in **Societal Responsibilities**, found at www.ctsanimals.ca/va2020/stableQ4.html.

▶ What is the issue about?

▶ What are two different perspectives, or points of view, regarding this issue?

▶ What is your opinion?

3. Find an example of an animal neglect or abuse case on the Alberta SPCA website at www.albertaspca.org/neglect-abuse/updates.html or www.albertaspca.org/neglect-abuse/prohibitions.html.

▶ Compare the sequence of events in this case to the steps described in the "Anatomy of an Investigation" link on the Alberta SPCA website at www.albertaspca.org/neglect-abuse/investigating/anatomy-investigation.html. Create a bulleted list of the main steps involved in reporting a case of animal abuse.



Add this bulleted list to your portfolio.