

Husbandry Practices



About 6000 years ago, there is evidence of the first domestication of the horse. That created a whole new life for the horse which would require adaptation and coping to live the way humans required. No doubt, there was a great deal of trial and error, and mistakes made – unfortunately, this likely did not end well for the horse.

Fortunately, we now have science-based husbandry practices that can help us take the guess work out of horse husbandry practices and develop a daily management routine that is better for the horse. In support of horse welfare, the new Equine Code of Practice for Canada outlines the basic practices, based on science that will help support health and well-being of the horse over its lifetime.

In previous articles on the Code, the important role of forage was stressed for healthy functioning of the digestive tract. In Section 6 of the Code, the importance of “friends” and “freedom” are reviewed and how the lack of socialization and exercise can lead to abnormal behaviours, called stereotypies, as a way of coping with the stressful and unnatural housing conditions. For healthy horses, daily turnout and exercise are important and horses should be given the opportunity to socialize with other horses, as they are herd animals and the company of others is important to their welfare.



There has also been great progress in the science of equine behaviour and learning, and the Code also requires handlers to familiarize themselves with equine behaviour and competent, humane methods of training and handling. Understand horse’s vision, point of balance and flight zones by reviewing [Appendix-G](#). Courses, such as the ones offered by Equine Guelph in its online Diploma and Certificate programs can provide a pathway for learning about important areas in the care of the horse. The owner that takes up the challenge to learn more about learning theory and its application to training practices will be rewarded with a much improved equine partner, regardless of the sport or activity.

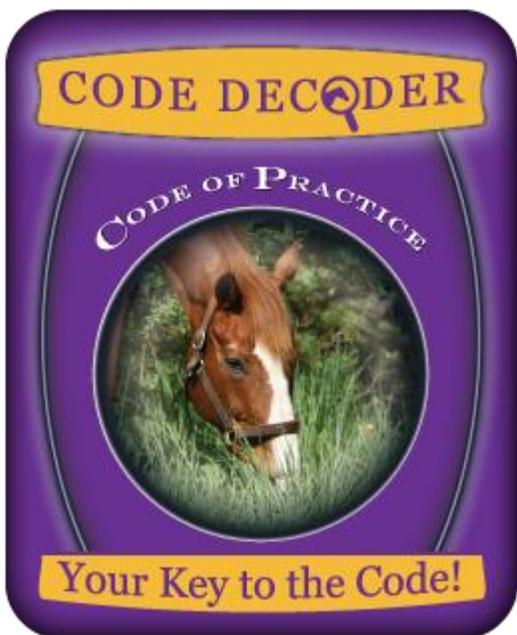
There is also important information in the code for all horse owners to read on potentially painful procedures that may be necessary (such as castration) and the role of the veterinarian in providing effective pain control and relief. New in the Code is the restrictions on tail docking or nicking, which is not acceptable, as outlined in this section.

Regular foot trimming or shoeing (every 5-8 weeks for farrier care as needed for proper management) and hoof hygiene is a requirement -- as we all are familiar with the “No foot no horse” concept. This is an area particularly where neglect can cause significant and long-lasting impacts on the welfare of the horse. And lastly, proper grooming is imperative to keep the skin healthy and free of problems such as dirt build-up (which can cause harness or saddle sores). Skin irritations and burdock injuries are reviewed with requirements for inspecting the horse to ensure this is part of the husbandry practices.

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Since the first domestication of the horse thousands of years ago, we have certainly come a long way in our learning and approaches for husbandry practices. We have also moved ahead in the development of new knowledge on the impact of horse welfare from those practices. It is an important responsibility for us as horse owners to ensure our husbandry practices meet the science-based requirements that fully support health and welfare of our horses.



Learn more about the Equine Code of Practice by taking part in our [new Code Decoder tool](#), which helps you learn about the requirements and to take part in a self-assessment.

Learn more about the Equine Code of Practice – visit – [Husbandry Practices](#)

Sign up for our [free e-newsletter](#) which will deliver monthly welfare tips throughout 2015 and announce tools to aid all horse owners in carrying out their 'Full-Circle-Responsibility' to our beloved horses.

Stay tuned to learn about Reproductive Management in the August e-news and check out the learning opportunities offered by Equine Guelph's [online education program](#).

In partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Equine Guelph is developing a 'Full-Circle-Responsibility' equine welfare educational initiative which stands to benefit the welfare of horses in both the racing and non- racing sectors.