

WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER FEED HORSES, PONIES OR DONKEYS WITHOUT THE OWNER'S PERMISSION

Since the start of the pandemic and during the three national lockdowns, there has been an increase in people visiting the countryside. During these visits, members of the public have fed horses and ponies that do not belong to them and sadly, **many animals have died or have become very poorly as a result.**

Most horses, ponies and donkeys are kept as pets and used for pleasure, rather than work. As we know, pet owners love their animals very much and take very good care of them. Owners of horses, ponies and donkeys are no different from owners of any other family pet, such as the family dog or cat and **would be devastated if anything happened to them.**

HORSES CANNOT BE SICK AND SO MAY CHOKO ON FOOD THEY CAN'T CHEW.

Many horses and ponies have choked to death on vegetables such as raw potatoes, something they'd never usually eat, but can also choke on carrots etc., if they can't chew them. Horses are regularly treated by equine dentists, but elderly ponies with few teeth can also choke if they are eating too much hay at once. A passer-by could offer some but it might be more than they can manage in one go, resulting in difficulty, so this careful management is best left to the owner.

DID YOU KNOW?

SOME HORSES HAVE DIABETES.

This is called Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) for horses. Any horse, pony or donkey with this condition should avoid eating fruit, vegetables or anything else with a high sugar content.

DID YOU KNOW?

SOME HORSES GET REALLY BAD TUMMY ACHES

– very easily. It is called Colic for horses, which is caused by food getting stuck inside their gut causing a blockage. It is incredibly painful for horses and requires immediate veterinary attention and possibly surgery. In some cases, colic may even lead to death.

DID YOU KNOW?

HORSES, PONIES AND DONKEYS CAN PUT ON WEIGHT VERY EASILY

– and will quickly become too fat if allowed to eat more than they need. Being overweight will lead to various health problems which makes them feel very ill. Owners have to be very strict when it comes to their horse's diet. They will weigh hay and horse feed precisely, in order to make sure that their pet is not over eating.

DID YOU KNOW?

MOST HORSES, PONIES AND DONKEYS ARE ON STRICT DIETS SO MUST NOT EAT ANYTHING OF A HIGH SUGAR CONTENT.

Many fruits and vegetables have too much sugar to be a healthy treat for horses so apples and carrots as well as things like peppermints should never be fed to a horse without the owner's permission.

DID YOU KNOW?

SOME HORSES HAVE ALLERGIES TO CERTAIN FOODS

– even things like dusty hay. If you do not know what the horse is allergic to, you might be giving that horse food that they have an allergic reaction to. This could result in breathing difficulties which will require immediate veterinary attention.

DID YOU KNOW?

HORSES, PONIES AND DONKEYS CAN BE VERY UNPREDICTABLE AND DANGEROUS TO BE AROUND.

Most horses are privately owned so are often only used to one handler. They ARE NOT like riding school ponies, who are used to being handled by lots of different people, including children.

DID YOU KNOW?

If strangers start to offer them treats, they tend to start to get 'nippy' with people and quarrelsome with their field mates. You are at risk of being bitten or kicked if you start feeding horses that are not yours. You should never enter the field of a horse or pony you don't know. Horses can also cause a lot of pain if they stand on your foot!



NEVER FEED FREE ROAMING PONIES.

Found in the New Forest, on Exmoor, Dartmoor, Wales etc., free roaming ponies are an essential part of natural land and not there for your entertainment. Feeding them interferes with their natural routines and could encourage them to gather near roads which makes them extremely vulnerable to road traffic accidents.

DID YOU KNOW?

LAWN MOWER CUTTINGS ARE EXTREMELY DEADLY TO HORSES

– but many people aren't aware of this. Cut grass is very different to hay or grazing due to the fermentation process – which is very fast and can poison a horse very quickly. People have emptied grass cuttings into paddocks but this is extremely dangerous as horses will greedily gobble them up not realising it will harm them.

DID YOU KNOW?

The best way to behave around horses, ponies or donkeys that you do not know, is:

- **DO NOT FEED THEM ANYTHING** – as they may have health problems or, they may injure you with their quest for food and may cause arguments amongst their field friends.
- **ENJOY LOOKING AT THEM FROM A SAFE DISTANCE** – because they may not be used to strangers so might kick out or bite you.

Feeding horses without the owner's consent can cause unnecessary suffering. This is an offence under the **Animal Welfare Act 2006** and the person(s) responsible could be **liable for prosecution.**

If you ever have concerns about an animal's welfare, please **contact the owner** in the first instance (which is easier to do thanks to social media), or the RSPCA. If the horse is in danger, you can also report it to the police.

Please can we ask that **no one ever feeds an animal that they do not have the owner's permission to feed.** We invite those concerned to join the group '**Stop Feeding Our Horses**' and we are happy to answer anyone's questions on this matter. Please share this message far and wide and help us to prevent any more tragedies.

#StopFeedingOurHorses

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