

# Horse Well-Being



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## Signs of Poor Horse Well-Being

- Horses that are sick or in pain may display some of the following sickness behaviors or signs:
  - Legs and spine are not straight
  - Overly sensitive to sound and touch
  - Reduced activity level
  - Reduced social interactions
  - Reduced feeding and drinking
  - Reduced grooming behavior
  - Dull, dirty appearance
  - Difficulty walking
  - Signs of swelling or injuries
  - Higher or lower body temperature than normal
  - Discharge from the eyes, nose or other areas
  - Lowered head and tail for long periods
  - Sweating that is not due to exercise
  - Horses that are in pain may:
    - Stare and not move their eyes as much
    - Hold ears back for longer than normal
    - Have dilated nostrils
    - Unusual posture or lying position

## Do You Have an Animal Well-Being Concern?

- Call your local police department.
- For livestock and poultry concerns, contact the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) <http://www.in.gov/boah/>.

## Causes of Poor Horse Well-Being

The following situations or conditions can compromise cattle well-being:

- Neglect: failing to care for an animal, and:
  - Endangering an animal's health by not providing adequate food or water
  - Restraining an animal in a way that causes pain or jeopardizes animal health
- Cruelty or abuse: causing physical harm, mental harm, pain or suffering to an animal
- Abandonment: deserting a horse or leaving a horse without making provisions for the animal's long term care
- Negative mental states such as pain, fear, frustration and distress
- Prolonged periods of thirst or hunger
- Prolonged periods of restraint and immobility
- Illness, injury or disease
- Crowding
- No shelter from bad weather

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## Quick Horse Facts

- There are more than 680 breeds of horses
- When horses have access to pasture, they will graze and spend 12 or more hours eating during a 24 hour period
- Horses can sleep while standing or lying
- Horses have good vision and can see all the way



## What is Horse Well-Being?

Cattle well-being is more than simply being healthy; cattle well-being includes:

1. Feelings or emotions, such as contentment
2. Being able to behave naturally, such as grooming, stretching and turning around fully
3. being healthy; having no injuries or disease

## Important Horse Behavior

- **Feeding and drinking:** necessary for health and proper biological functioning
  - Foals need colostrum after birth
- **Rest and sleep:** necessary for health and proper biological functioning
- **Grooming and rubbing:** keep body in good condition and reduce disease and parasites



## Behaviors of Concern

- **Crib biting (cribbing):** biting an object while contracting the neck muscles and pulling air into the throat. May be due to lack of stimulation or not enough forage in the diet. Using surgery or devices to stop the behavior may not be successful and does not treat the cause.
- **Weaving:** repeatedly swaying from side to side that may be due to lack of stimulation and social isolation.
- **Continuous scratching, scraping or head shaking:** may be due to lack of stimulation, nerve problems or parasites.
- Providing opportunities to exercise, social companions, more time on pasture, more roughage and toys can prevent these behaviors.

## Caring for Horses

- Provide fresh, clean water that is never frozen.
- Provide shelter that is dry and has adequate ventilation
- Keep the stall or box clean and dry to prevent hoof problems and respiratory issues
- Provide high quality hay and grain
- Provide forage day and night because horses eat during the day and at night
- Energy and nutritional requirements of animals are higher for 1) pregnant animals, 2) animals that are producing milk, 3) animals that are growing and 4) horses that are exercised a lot such as race horses and event horses.
- Consult a nutritionist for proper feed practices



- Check horses often for diseases, parasites and injuries - contact your local veterinarian if you detect these problems
- To capture and handle a horse, approach the horse's shoulder area; do not make sudden movements.
- Clean and trim hooves regularly
- Newborn foals should have regular, positive contact with humans to get used to being