

Ownership of a horse or pony is not to be undertaken lightly and there are many important facts to take into account before coming to a decision – considerations such as initial outlay, ongoing costs of grazing, food and veterinary care, the farrier, provision of suitable facilities – lots of time; and the fact that your horse or pony will require these things for many years. Will the novelty wear off? If the answer is ‘no’, read on:

THE LICENCE: You must first obtain a livestock permit from Council. The application fee is \$25 with an annual fee of \$25.

PONY CLUBS: Kawerau Pony Club is located on Tamarangi Drive. This is a great place to start your enquiries and look into grazing for your horse. They also have instructors who are knowledgeable and will teach.

THE PADDOCK: You will need a well-fenced, secure paddock and fresh water supply. Ensure there is some form of windbreak in or around your paddocks for shelter, a hedge and/or trees will suffice. A shed in which to store feed and gear is also desirable.

Horses may be kept on any vacant section with no dwelling house which is at least one acre (0.4 hectares) in size per animal. Miniature horses may be kept on any vacant section with no dwelling house which is at least half an acre (0.2 hectares) in size.

FENCING: Fencing must be adequate for the intended purpose.

As a guideline the minimum standard of construction should be a top wire or rail not less than 1.5 metres from the ground, at least 6 galvanised wires or equivalent and a bottom wire or rail not more than 125mm from the ground, so that any horizontal gaps are no wider than 145mm. Wire fences should be properly strained and battened and all fences need to have sturdy posts, securely rammed. Gates must be lockable and of solid hinged construction.

Fencing is also subject to the provisions of the general Bylaw Part 2: Public Places.

WATER: Access to a reticulated water supply must be available for the stock at all times. A backflow prevention device is required to be fitted to the supply line to stop water supply contamination. Where an authorised officer determines extraordinary usage of water, the landowner shall be required to install a water meter.

FOOD: Your horse will require plenty of good hay, and also a rack to keep it in. If left on the ground it will be trampled upon and become inedible. Barley, lucerne chaff and bran are good additions to the winter diet.

WORMS: Worming is a priority and can generally be carried out either by, or under the direction of your veterinarian. Worm infestation is serious and can result in severe colic intestinal blockages, perforation of the gut, plus damage to internal organs. Even when such extreme problems do not result, a horse with worm infestation will not be a good “doer” and can suffer chronic symptoms such as diarrhoea and anaemia.

Because worm cycles vary according to local weather conditions, your vet will be the best person to advise on timing for specific parasite worming in your area. Where a number of horses are paddocked together, it is a good policy to join with other owners to have the animals regularly drenched at the same time, so breaking the infestation cycle.

PASTURE HYGIENE: The horse owner can do a great deal to protect the animal from worms by following a system of pasture hygiene, which minimises its contamination with worm eggs and larvae. Here are some hints to give your horses the best chance of staying relatively free of parasites:

1. All horses paddocked together should be wormed on the same day. After worming, move horses to a clean, spelled paddock if possible.
2. Where possible, harrowing or slashing to spread out manure heaps is recommended as soon as the horses have been shifted from the pasture.
3. Ideally, paddocks should be spelled for a minimum of 2 - 3 weeks in hot summer conditions, 5 - 6 weeks in cold weather, or 3 - 4 months in Autumn/Spring.
4. Any new horse being introduced into an area grazed by others should be wormed on arrival and if possible, kept "quarantined" in a separate yard for 24 hours to allow the emptying out process to be completed.

TEETH: Ask your veterinarian to check your horse's teeth at the time of drenching for worms.

TETANUS: All horses and ponies should be vaccinated against tetanus, with booster shots as prescribed by your vet. On purchasing an animal check with the previous owner when the last vaccination was given. As with humans, puncture wounds are the most dangerous. **Humans need tetanus shots too! Keep up the boosters for anyone who is around horses – and don't go barefoot.**

TYING-UP (OR CRAMP): This affects the rump and back leg muscles causing swelling, stiffness and soreness. The most severe form of this affliction, "azoturia" is complete muscle lock-up and can be fatal in acute cases. Very nervous and heavily muscled horses seem more prone. Call a vet immediately.

COLIC: Colic, or abdominal pain, can vary from apparently mild discomfort to severe pain. In its milder form, the horse should be watched closely for indications of acute or spasmodic colic. Observe passing of urine or faeces, so that you can give details to the vet. Walking the horse may clear minor obstructions or gas from the large bowel, but if the condition persists, or shows any sign of worsening, call veterinary help without delay.

LOVE YOUR PONY - talk to him kindly, spend as much of your spare time as possible with him. Remember that horses in their natural state are herd animals. They love company and in most cases, they love human company.