



Basic Needs (of Equal Importance)

1. **A Good Living Environment** There are three primary places to keep your horse: a pasture, a barn, or a run. One is not better than another, but there are things to keep in mind for all three:
 - **Pasture:** Keeping your horse in a pasture is often low maintenance and low cost, but leaving a horse out to pasture for long periods of time without supervision is unacceptable.
 - It is important to maintain the quality of the pasture by practicing field rotation. Divide the area into separate sections (one horse requires a minimum of one acre for grazing, which can vary according to season and geography) and allow the horse(s) in only one section at a time. Horses are selective about their grazing: make sure the pasture has an acceptable amount of nutritious grass-weeds will not do and can sometimes be poisonous. Poisonous plants and weeds include, but are not limited to: yew, deadly nightshade, ragwort, foxglove, buttercups, oak leaves and acorns, bracken, laurel, privet, meadow saffron, castor bean, locoweed, horsetail, star thistle, and sorghum.
 - A good fence and gate is imperative to a good pasture. Make sure the type of fencing used is the least likely to cause injury to the horse. Fence off hazards like sharp objects or poisonous trees. Check the fence regularly for areas needing repair.
 - A pasture needs to provide some sort of shelter. Natural shelter, such as trees, rock overhangs or ravines can work, as can a man-made shelter like a shed or lean-to. Make sure the horse can adequately escape wind, rain, snow, and sun.
 - Make sure the pasture can drain efficiently. Horses should not stand in water or excessive mud for long periods of time.
 - The pasture should provide some even ground. Standing on steep hills for long periods of time can become uncomfortable for the horse.
 - Remove feces from the pasture on a regular basis.
 - Make sure there is easy access to the pasture in case of an emergency. The pasture should be near a road.
 - Fresh, clean water is rarely naturally available in a pasture and therefore should be provided. Be sure the water supplied cannot be dumped over and check that it does not freeze.
 - Many areas around the country have a winter season that makes it impossible for horses to live on pasture grass year-round. If you have a full winter, expect to supplement your horse's diet with feed about six months out of the year.
 - **For more information on pasturing, visit the following links.**
 - <http://ezinearticles.com/?Pasturing-a-Horse&id=225365>
 - <http://www.horses-and-horse-information.com/horsepasture.shtml>
 - <http://www.horses-and-horse-information.com/articles/horse-management.shtml>
 - http://www.horsekeeping.com/horse_management/pasture-life.htm
 - <http://www.horses-and-horse-information.com/articles/0297pastr.shtml>

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- **Barn:** Keeping your horse in a barn is usually more expensive than keeping it on pasture, since you will at least have to pay for feed, but is sometimes the only choice - or the best one for your situation. Here are some things to keep in mind about keeping your horse in a barn.
 - Make sure the stall is a good size. A 12 x 12 (or very close to this, depending on lumber size) stall is usually adequate for a single horse. Adjustments should be made for a mare and foal or exceptionally large horses.
 - Provide proper bedding. Horses should avoid standing on concrete or hard surfaces all day. Straw and wood shavings work to keep a stall comfortable and dry for the horse so that it can lie down when it needs to. Bedding should be cleaned and replaced regularly.
 - Droppings and urine-soaked bedding or dirt needs to be cleaned out of the stall on a daily basis.
 - Two buckets of clean, fresh water should always be available.
 - Let the horse out. A horse should be let out of its stall on a daily basis for exercise, stimulation and grooming.
 - Horses in the barn need supervision, just as they do in the pasture. Horses ought to be checked on at least twice a day during feeding times, but more visits are preferable. If you keep your horse in someone else's barn, be sure there is a caretaker on hand.
 - **Run:** Keeping your horse in a run provides a combination of pasture- and barn-living. A run usually has a man-made shelter with three sides and a roof, with a fenced, outdoor area attached to it. Runs are generally bigger than stalls so may not need as much cleaning, and are on dirt ground rather than concrete, so bedding is not always necessary. You must still provide water and feed your horse in the same manner as if it were in a stall, and clean the run when necessary; but you probably would not have to remove the horse from the run for exercise on a daily basis. Again, horses in a run need to be checked on regularly to make sure they have adequate water and have not injured themselves.
2. **Good Nutrition:** Just like humans, horses need to eat right. It is always wise to consult a veterinarian or equine nutritionist when setting up a feeding schedule for your horse. The nutritional needs of a horse will vary according to its size, age, activity level, environment, and its individual metabolic characteristics. Hay or pasture is the base of every horse's diet and can meet all the needs of some horses. Horses should receive 1-1.5% of their body weight in forage per day, but intense physical activity will obviously create a need for more. A variety of grains - oats, corn, barley and other supplements - can be used as the concentrate portion of a horse's diet. Grain and supplements can be fed according to the recommendation on their package, or with advice from a vet or equine nutritionist.

Clean, fresh water is very important. Water should either be available for free-choice, or the

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horse should have the option to drink as much as it wants at least twice a day. Horses should drink five to ten gallons per day, depending on weather, activity or lactation. Dehydration leads to colic, weight loss, kidney disease, and more.

3. **Vet Care:** Horses need regular, preventative healthcare along with the care they receive when problems arise. Regular vet care may include, but is not limited to, vaccinations, deworming, and dental care. Disease and parasites are often in a horse's environment but go undetected by humans, so professional care is a must.
4. **Hoof Care:** All horses need regular, routine hoof care. On the lighter end of the care spectrum, a horse would need its hooves trimmed about once every two months throughout the year. On the heavier end of that spectrum, a horse might require complex corrective shoeing procedures to maintain a healthy foot. A horse's hoof needs depend on its age, season, nutrition, environment, management and injury. Consult a farrier to assess your horse's specific needs.

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