



Information Leaflet No. 2

NATURAL BOARDING

By altering the horse's natural living conditions and denying its biological needs (as seen in conventionally kept stabled or yarded horses) we are not only weakening the horse and making it susceptible to disease, but are in fact directly causing health problems. However as very few of us have a spare 200 acres of open grassland to put our horses on, how can we compromise to still give our horses physical and psychological health? By concentrating on the biologically necessary aspects of the horse's environment, it is actually often surprisingly simple to adapt our present grazing conditions to allow our horses a long and healthy life! The key elements required for natural boarding are:

Constant Natural Climate in the form of all-year round constant outdoors living in a paddock with good free access to wind and rain shelter. This allows for proper stimulation of the horse's thermoregulatory system so the horses can cope with any weather conditions. A return to the natural environment improves the horse's immune system making it better suited to resist disease.



Constant Natural Movement as in 24 hours per day freedom of movement and a reason to move in the form of other horses for playing etc. Horses living with company and sufficient natural movement will have better muscle tone and are less likely to take off the minute they are under saddle and out of their 'cages'.

Psychological Stimulation through the Natural Environment, Company of Other Horses and Human Interaction Horses with sufficient psychological stimulation are calmer, more level-headed and less likely to spook or bolt since they are confident, aware and comfortable with their environment and have trust in the human.

Nutritional Variety and Constant Food Uptake For the horse's digestive system to function correctly it is important



that the horse is able to feed continuously (24/7) via healthy pasture grasses and herbs, ad-lib hay and branches. Natural boarding will normalise weight, allowing for gradual

seasonal weight changes and ensure adequate nutritional variety.

Natural Body Posture is with the head down so all feed must be given at ground level. This posture shifts the upper and lower jaw into alignment, teeth meet correctly and grind evenly. Head low feeding reduces the risk of respiratory infections and diseases from dust particles etc (as most people believe they feed up high to avoid dust inhalation etc.) being embedded in the mucus membranes and encourages proper weight distribution on the back and hooves.

Daily Exposure of Hooves to Water is important to ensure that the high water content of the hooves is maintained. This can be done through soaking the hooves in water (a natural water hole, bucket or purpose built hoof bath) past the coronet band for 10-15 minutes per day.

Resting Places in the Open that provide sufficient shelter from the sun or winter rain but where there is a free flow of air and accumulations of ammonia or carbon dioxide cannot build up.

No Grease or Oils on Hooves and Horseshoes Grease or oil based hoof conditioners are not needed as hoof moisture can be maintained through daily exposure to water. Horseshoes are harmful to the horse and are not required by a horse with natural living conditions and physiologically correct hoof form.

No Blankets, Leg Wraps, Bandages or Other Clothing or Protective Wear as these are usually more detrimental than beneficial to the horse's health.

Further Information:

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