Healthy Horse Normals/ VITALS

TEMPERATURE: 98.5-100.5 F= NORMAL.   SHAKE DOWN THERMOMETER before taking temperature. The horse's temperature is taken rectally, using a digital or fluid thermometer. Temperatures may increase by 2 to 3 degrees due to environmental temperatures, exercise and changes in hydration.

RESPIRATION: 10 to 16 = NORMAL. The horse's respiratory rate is measured by watching the nostrils or flanks, and counting the number of times the horse breaths out. Count the number of breaths in 15 seconds. Multiply this number times 4. On average, this number should be 10-16 breaths per minute. As with the heart rate, the respiration rate can be influenced by environmental factors and excitement. If the horse's respiration rate exceeds the heart rate, the horse is in physiological distress, and a veterinarian should be contacted immediately.

HEART RATE: 28-44= NORMAL. Heart Rate is a little more difficult to assess. Here's a couple of ways. A horse's pulse can be taken on the inside of the jaw or on the ankle. The heart rate can also be measured using a stethoscope behind the elbow. The resting pulse/heart rate should be between 28 to 44 beats per minute in a 50 to 80 degree Fahrenheit climate. Age (younger horses have a higher heart rate than older horses), ambient (outside) temperatures, humidity, exercise and excitement levels can all cause elevations in heart rates.

MUCUS MEMBRANES: PINK=Normal. The mucous membranes of the horse's gums and lips should be a healthy pink color and slightly moist. Mucous membranes that are a pale, white, yellow, or deep purple color are indicators of a problem. The circulation of a horse can be tested on the horse's gums by gently pressing the thumb against the gums of the horse, releasing the thumb and counting the number of seconds it takes for the gums to go from white back to their original color. This is called capillary refill and should take one to two seconds.

WATER: Horses need 8 to 12 gallons of clean water daily. A working horse needs more