

Domestic Horse vs. Wild Horse

	WILD HORSE	DOMESTIC HORSE	CONSEQUENCES
HOUSING/ACTIVITY LEVEL	Constantly looking for food and water source; can travel up to 8km/day	Can be confined in a smaller area; a stall for portion of the day and/or turned out in paddocks.	Domestic horse may not be travelling as much as their wild counterparts since they are not looking for food/water sources. Constant activity may help intestinal motility which keeps digesta moving through the gut properly.
ENERGY REQUIREMENTS	Expends most of energy grazing with short burst of high intensity (evading predator)	May have much higher energy requirement if horse is being ridden and/or performance horse.	May need to feed higher energetically dense feeds such as concentrate to meet energy requirements.
FORAGE	Horses are primarily grazers but have been known to browse on trees, shrubs, branches. They consume large amounts fibrous material that is often high in moisture that varies in quality throughout the year. They need to eat much larger quantities of the fibrous material to meet their nutritional requirements	Domestic horses are fed higher quality forage in pastures and hay throughout the year. Hay contains much less water content than forages found in the wild. Harvesting and storage of hay can also lead to the formation of dust and mould (mycotoxins)	Water needs to be provided in high quantity (especially when feeding hay) Quality of hay is important to minimize the effect of dust and mould which could lead to respiratory and digestive problems.
CONCENTRATES	Consume very little to no concentrates or starch in their diet.	Are sometimes fed concentrates that can be high in starch.	Horses have limited ability to digest high starch diet. Can lead to undigested carbohydrates reaching the hindgut and causing disturbances Processing of concentrates is often required to improve digestibility in the horse.

FEEDING FREQUENCY	Will spend on average 16-20 hours of a day grazing.	May be fed forage and concentrate meals on a fixed schedule and may not have access to continuous grazing.	Horse evolved to have a trickle feeding system, where they need to consume small amounts of food throughout the day to keep the digestive tract moving properly. Having an "empty" gut can lead to gastric ulcers and fluctuations in digestive process.
WATER	Drink from bodies of water while drinking with head lowered. May not have access to water at all times.	Have access to fresh water at all times!	
DENTAL	Teeth are worn down naturally by eating coarser, more fibrous material which contains silica particles which wear down the surface of the teeth.	Eat concentrates which does not require as much chewing (10,000 times/day compared 40,000 times/day for hay)	Require routine dental care. It has been suggested that dental pointes are more likely to develop in horses being fed a high concentrate diet.
PARASITES	May be less susceptible to parasite infection given their larger living range.	May be more susceptible to parasitic infection due to the limited turnout areas they are given. They often eat and defecate in the same area.	Parasitic infection can cause illnesses, including colic, weight loss, unthriftiness. There is also the growing problem of dewormer resistance.