

‘Help... I’m not horsey!’



A guide to help those less confident with horses prepare for equine placement

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Introduction

Hello! We are your Liverpool Equine Veterinary Society (LEVS) committee of 2020-2021 and are writing this document in the hope of helping out those less confident around horses, and would like a couple of pointers before their first equine placement. We completely understand that not everybody who comes to vet school is from a horsey background, but rest assured this does not mean that you can't excel in the equine sector. Some of the best equine vets didn't grow up around horses, you've just got to get stuck in! The aim of this guide is to increase your confidence with some of the tricky terminology and common things that you may get asked to do whilst on placement.

Best of luck with your studies and we hope to see you at the LEVS events this year! If you have any further questions, queries, worries or woes about anything equine, please email the committee at liverpoolunivetsoc@gmail.co.uk and we'll do our best to help.

The LEVS Committee 2020-21,

President: Alex Chester

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Layman's Anatomy

Many vets, nurses, staff and clients will refer to anatomical parts of the horse in **layman's terms**, so it's a good idea to be familiar with these.



Drawing by Chloe Combe - Final Year

Basic Husbandry

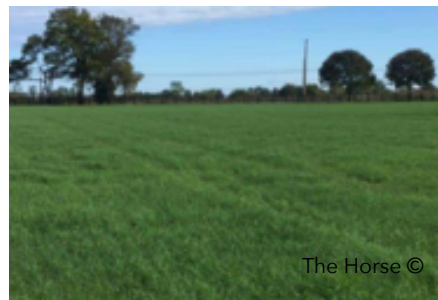
Feedstuffs

What a horse eats can be roughly split into **forage** and **concentrates**, also known as '**hard feed**'. Different horses will eat different ratios of forage:concentrates, depending on their workload and lifestyle.

Forages

Grass

An obvious one! However too much rich grass can be very dangerous to some ponies. This will be covered fully during your lectures.



Hay

Grass that has been cut, dried and baled.



Haylage

Grass that has been cut, dried (for less time than hay), baled and then wrapped to retain moisture. Tastes sweeter than hay. Try it ;)



Straw

Dry stalks of cereal plants after the grain has been removed. Most commonly used as bedding but can also be a feed substitute for those 'dieting'!



Chaff / Chop

Dried forage cut into short pieces, often with added molasses. Mainly used to accompany concentrates in a 'hard feed'. Bulks out the feed and aids digestion & gut health when feeding concentrates.

**Readi-grass**

Grass where water is removed gently using a low temperature drying process, retaining the natural flavour and high nutrient value of fresh grass. Ideal for those without pasture access or as a hay substitute.



Common Concentrates / Hard Feed

Competition Mix

A highly digestible, nutrient dense mix which provides a mix of energy sources. Used in those with higher energy demand/workload.

**Conditioning Cubes**

A non-heating and highly digestible cube that is perfect for restoring lost condition (weight/muscle) without making the horse too fizzy.

**Balancer**

Small pellets containing essential vitamins, minerals and protein that may not be provided from forage alone or when fed a calorie restricted diet.



**Stud Mix/
Cubes**

Suitable for all types of breeding stock (broodmares in pregnancy/lactation, covering stallions, foals, weanlings & yearlings).
Energy dense.



Bran

Made from the hard-outer layers of wheat grain. Hot water added to make into a 'bran mash', highly palatable.
An old fashioned method of feeding seen less often nowadays.



Sugar beet

A flake/pellet derived from sugar beet pulp, that requires soaking (pictured).
Often used to add bulk and/or increase palatability.
Never feed unsoaked! Some require 24hrs.



Rugs

Changing rugs on PCEMS is a regular occurrence, so familiarising yourself with common types of rugs will likely come in handy. Be sure to ask if you're not sure you have the right one, they can look very similar!

Stable Rug

Designed to keep the horse warm whilst stabled, come in a variety of thicknesses or 'weights'; light/medium/heavy. Not designed for outdoor use as not waterproof. May or may not have a neck cover.
A bit like a big duvet!



**Turnout Rug /
New Zealand**

Designed to keep the horse warm and dry whilst out in the field. Waterproof, and come in a variety of thicknesses or 'weights'; light/medium/heavy. May or may not have a neck cover.



Cooler / Fleece

A thin and breathable rug, that will keep the horse warm and comfortable usually after exercise or during travelling. May also be used as a very lightweight stable rug.



Exercise Sheet

Used when the horse is being ridden to keep the animal warm during low intensity exercise. They cover the horse's body from the front of the saddle to the rear of the horse. May or may not be waterproof.



Fly Rug

A full body rug made of a very fine mesh like material, designed to protect the horse from flies whilst remaining light and breathable during summer months.



5 top tips for horse handling

- 1) When leading a horse, always do so standing on the **left** of the horse, and when turning try to turn the horse **away** from you. Keep your right hand close to the head collar and left hand further down the rope with a firm grip, but never wrap it around your fingers. *NB: Horses are used to almost all everyday tasks being done from their **left side***
- 2) Always let the horse **know you are approaching** before touching it, using your hands and voice. For example don't just grab its leg without any warning, as this may startle the horse and warrant an unwanted reaction.
- 3) Never stand directly **in front** or **behind** a horse, especially when it's being examined. They can be dangerous at both ends!
- 4) When going through a doorway, make sure the door is **wide open**, and that the horse is square to the doorway before passing through. If the doorway is narrow, you **go through first** and make the horse wait. It can then go through after you as you stand to the side.
- 5) Be **assertive** and **confident** in what you are asking the horse to do. Horses are good at detecting fear in their handler and rely on them heavily for reassurance!

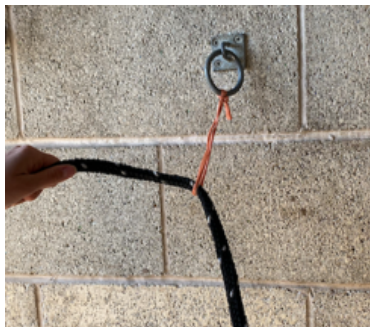


How to tie up a horse

Being asked to or needing to tie a horse up is fairly common on both CEMS and PCEMS, so it's a really handy and simple thing to master before your first placement.

First of all, **never** tie a horse up directly to a fixed object. Horses can be spooked easily and will often panic and do absolutely anything to make a break from the situation. Being tied to a fixed object in this mind state opens up all kinds of possibilities of injury. Instead, look out for **baling twine**, this is often orange in colour but can vary. Baling twine can be snapped by the horse if it really pulls back in a panic.

Horses are tied up using a **quick-release knot**. If you're not familiar with how to perform one, follow the steps below and have a practice before your first equine placement.



Step 1. Thread the tail end of the lead rope through the baling twine and pull most of the rope through



Step 2. Using the tail end of the rope, make a reverse D shape.



Step 3. Reach through the reverse D with one hand, and grab hold of the tail end of the lead rope



Step 4. Pull a loop of the tail end of the rope through the reverse D.



Step 5. Firmly pull the loop whilst also steadying the head end of the rope, to secure the knot.



Untying the knot. Firmly pull on the tail end of the rope, for immediate release.

How to pick out a horse's foot

It is important for horse's feet to be picked out before and after exercise, to ensure **no stones are trapped** in the hoof. It is a basic task that most EMS providers will expect you to be able to carry out. 'Holding a leg' may also be a requirement on CEMS where the vet is examining or treating another body part, as it acts as an effective yet gentle form of restraint.

Ensure the horse is securely tied up or held, and that the horse knows you are approaching before attempting to pick out a leg.



Step 1. Start with the left fore (if appropriate) and stand parallel to the horse's feet, facing the rear. Run your hand nearest the horse down the entire length of the leg, starting at the shoulder (or rump for a hindlimb).



Step 2. Once you have reached the fetlock, grasp firmly below it and gently pull upwards. The horse may also know verbal cues, e.g. a clicking noise or 'up'. If reluctant, lean against them so that some weight shifts off the desired leg.



Step 3. Once the horse is balanced and happy with you holding the limb, move your hand downwards to support the limb at the level of the coronary band.



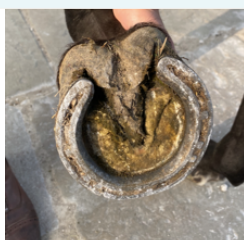
Step 4. Identify the 'frog'; a triangular shaped fleshy part of anatomy that is particularly sensitive! Avoid poking this directly with the hoof pick. (Also, note here we can see a pesky stone!)



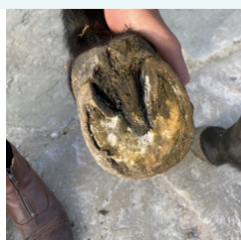
Step 5. Starting at the edges of the the frog, angle the hoof pick down and remove any stones or packed-in debris from the sole of the hoof. Using the inside edge of a shoe can also help clear a 'shod' foot.



Step 6. Some picks may have a brush on the reverse side, this can be used to flick out smaller bits of dirt. When you're happy the hoof is clear, gently lower the limb to the ground and move onto the next hoof.



A 'shod' foot -
clean alongside the inside of the shoe



A 'barefoot' foot - clean the interface
between sole and hoof wall



© Tackville
© Amazon
© Lincoln

Various hoof picks

Sectors of the equine world

Dressage:

- A sequence of **compulsory movements**, with or without music
- Scored by one or more judges on balance, rhythm, suppleness & obedience of the horse (in harmony with the rider)
- One of the equine olympic sports (on its own & as part of eventing)



© Macmillan Photography

Show Jumping:

- Riding over a course of **brightly coloured fences**, occurring penalty points for errors i.e. knocking a pole down or refusing a jump
- Depending on the competition, will be 1 or 2 rounds
- At least one round will be **against the clock**, in a 'Jump-off'. Accuracy & speed are paramount
- One of the equine olympic sports (on its own & as part of eventing)



© Horse & Hound

Cross country:

- As part of **eventing** or a competition in its own right (aka 'hunter trials')
- Riding over a course of rustic fences aiming for the 'optimum time'
- Going over/under the allocated time, refusals & falls = penalties
- A test of endurance, skill and agility



© Libby Law Photography

Eventing (aka 'Horse Trials'):

- **3 disciplines:** dressage, show jumping (SJ) and cross country (XC) combined to produce an overall total score (lower the better!)
- Takes place over 1, 2 or 3 days (level dependent)
- On some 3-day events show jumping comes last which can be affected by tiredness (usually SJ comes before XC at lower levels)
- The SJ element is 1 round with a maximum time allowed (aim is to jump a clear round inside the time)

Showing:

- A **judged exhibition** of horses and ponies where exhibits are marked on their **conformation, movement** and **manners**
- This can be in-hand or ridden, and some classes also include jumping (working hunter)



Polo:

- One of the world's oldest known team sports
- 2 teams of 4 players using mallets with long, flexible handles to **drive a wooden ball** down a grass field between 2 goal posts
- A game consisting of 6 periods of 7 ½ minutes each ('**chukkas**')
- Requires speed, agility, accuracy and endurance
- A full contact sport!



© Fifranck - Fotolia

Vaulting:

- An olympic sport of **gymnastics & dance** on horseback
- Riders can compete as individuals, pairs or teams
- *Beginners* compete in walk whilst *experienced* vaulters compete at canter on a 15m lunging circle
- Seven compulsory exercises and choreographed freestyle exercises done to music (judged on a scale of 1-10)
- Horse also judged on quality of movement as well as behaviour



© FEI

Horse Racing:

- 2 or more horses ridden by jockeys over a set distance, for competition
- May or may not include rustic fences/ditches (**National Hunt** vs. **Flat racing**)
- A multi-million pound industry in which vets are heavily involved in horse health, welfare and performance



© Getty images

Western riding:

- A riding style derived from ranching and welfare traditions brought to the Americans by the Spanish Conquistadors; now meets the working needs of the **American West Cowboys**
- Slightly different labelling of gait to include a **jog** (*slightly faster than a walk*) and a **lope** (*slow relaxed canter*)



© Horse & Rider

Endurance:

- A **long-distance** competition against the clock, testing the speed and endurance of a horse and challenging the rider over their effective use of pace, thorough knowledge of their horse's capabilities and ability to cross all kinds of terrain
- Although the rides are timed, the emphasis is on finishing **in good condition** rather than coming in first



© FEI

What do I need?

- ▶ **Sturdy hard-toed** boots. Trainers, open footwear and often wellies are **NOT** suitable for handling horses. NB: *some placement providers will ask you to wear steel-toe caps, but they should specify this before arrival.*
- ▶ **Avoid baggy clothing** that could become trapped in equipment, or flap about and spook horses!
- ▶ Some will require you to wear a **hard hat** (+/- gloves) whilst handling horses. Most will provide these if required.
- ▶ A good set of **waterproof clothing** and **layers** for winter days.
- ▶ A **thermometer, stethoscope** and a **watch** with a seconds hand will be required at clinical placements, but could also be useful for PCEMS.
- ▶ A small **notebook** to write any notes regarding patient observations.
- ▶ A **packed lunch**! There's a high chance you'll be in a fairly rural area, so don't bank on being near a shop, or getting time to stop at one if you're on the road.



Clinical parameters

Your CEMS placements will require you to perform clinical examinations on patients. It is important to know the **normal** parameters for a horse, so anything abnormal can be noted and reported quickly.

Heart Rate	28 - 44 bpm
Respiratory Rate	10 - 20 bpm
Temperature	37.0 - 38.4°C
Mucous Membranes	pink & moist
Capillary Refill Time (CRT)	< 2 seconds

Taking a Heart, Pulse and Respiratory Rate



Place your stethoscope just behind the **left elbow**, and apply gentle pressure. In heavier set or overweight horses, it may be harder to hear the heartbeat. Moving the horse's **leg forward** may make access easier, improving the clarity of the heartbeat.

A horse's pulse can be taken easily using the **facial artery**. The facial artery runs over the base of the mandible, in between where a noseband and throat lash would sit. Stabilise the artery, placing your fingers on the **inside of the mandible** (the thumb is best kept to the outside, to avoid feeling your own pulse), apply gentle pressure until you can detect the pulse consistently.



A **respiratory rate** can be taken by looking at the **abdomen/flank** area of the horse to look at the rise and fall. An inhale followed by the exhale = one breath.

Taking a Temperature

Ensure your thermometer is turned on and the display is working. If you're feeling super generous, add lube!

Let the horse know you are approaching before making your way to the hindquarters. Standing flush to the horse and **facing the rear**, gently hold the tail to one side. Introduce the thermometer to the perianal area before inserting into the anus (a little warning goes a long way). You may need to angle slightly to one side, so that the bulb **rests on mucosa** rather than a ball of faeces! Wait for the thermometer to beep and remove slowly.



Assessing Gut Motility & Digital Pulses



Gut auscultation should be split into **four quadrants**. Left upper and lower, and right upper and lower.

Listen to each quadrant for around 1 minute, in order to assess whether normal intestinal borborygmi is present, and record as -, +, ++ or +++.

Absent: -	Reduced: +
Normal: ++	Hypermotile: +++

Normally, digital pulses are **not palpable**, or at most very faint. An increased or bounding digital pulse is usually a sign of inflammation in the hoof, and can be a handy warning for laminitis.

The **palmer digital artery** can be palpated bilaterally on the latero-palmar aspect of the fetlock. Use your thumb and two first fingers to feel both sides at the same time. Take care not to press too hard, as you may occlude the artery, or accidentally feel your own pulse!



Do's & Don'ts of equine placements

DO:

- ▶ **Arrive early** (10-15mins is ideal). It's always helpful to introduce yourself and get your bearings.
- ▶ **Read up** about the type of establishment you are attending.
- ▶ **Help out the nurses/staff** members! This goes for any placement. In return they're much more likely to take the time to teach you new skills or explain anything you're unsure of.
- ▶ Know how to put on a **head collar** & **tie up** appropriately.
- ▶ Try to have an idea about **common breeds** & **colours** of horses.
- ▶ Know what is **poisonous** to horses e.g. ragwort or acorns.
- ▶ **ASK!** If unsure on how to do something e.g. mucking out. Some places can be very particular about how they do things, so it's always worth as ask to make sure.
- ▶ Ask for an **update** on cases that you've seen over the past few days; as well as being very interesting it shows you care! :)

DON'T:

- ▶ **Worry** if you are not horsey. Everyone has to start somewhere & enthusiasm is key!
- ▶ **Elaborate** on your previous experience- be honest as horses will show you up very quickly! You will not only be endangering yourself, but the horse and other people too.
- ▶ **Handle a horse you aren't confident with.** There's no shame in saying when you think a horse is a bit much for you, but there is shame in a horse getting loose!
- ▶ **Expect** to be able **to ride** whilst on your pre-clinical placement,- this request may be seen as inappropriate by some owners.
- ▶ **Run** near horses or **get too close** to the back end without sufficient warning.
- ▶ **Panic** if a horse gets loose or does something it shouldn't. Making loud noises or big gestures may panic the horse and make the situation worse.
- ▶ **Make fun** of the horse/pony no matter what it looks or acts like... that is someone's pride & joy, and they will not appreciate you offending it!

Glossary

A

B

- **Blinkers:** piece of tack to prevent the horse seeing the rear (+/- sides); particularly useful in driving & racing
- **Bomb-proof:** unlikely to become upset & shy from any strange sights or noises
- **Breastplate:** piece of tack used to stop the saddle sliding back
- **Broken in:** horse that has been trained for riding or pulling a vehicle
- **Brood mare:** mare used for breeding
- **Buck:** the horse plants the front feet & throws its hind end upwards (bad behavioural trait, or sometimes excitement)

C

- **Chaff/Chop:** dried forage cut into small pieces fed to bulk out concentrate feed
- **Chifney:** equipment designed for horses that are difficult/excitable to lead
- **Clean legged/limbed:** limbs without defects or obvious injuries
- **Cob:** body type (rather than breed) with a stout build & strong bones
- **Colt:** uncastrated male horse < 4 years old
- **Cold blooded:** large boned & heavy bodied draft breeds e.g. Clydesdales
- **Conformation:** shape/structure of the horse (impacts athletic ability & overall health i.e. lameness)
- **Cow-hocked:** a conformational fault where the hocks point inwards
- **Cresty:** fat pads along the upper curve of the neck
- **Cribbing/crib-biting:** grabbing a solid object e.g. stable door with incisor teeth, arching its neck & contracting the lower neck muscles
- **Curry comb:** plastic/rubber grooming tool with short 'teeth' on one side

D

- **Dam:** the mother of a horse (cf. to a sire, which is the father)
- **Disunited:** cantering/galloping with their front & back ends on different leads i.e. left hind, right hind, right fore, left fore
- **Dock:** the 'tail-bone'
- **Draught horse:** large horse bred for working e.g. ploughing (aka heavy horse)

E

F

- **Farrier:** specialist in hoof care inc. trimming, balancing & placing shoes
- **Feathers:** long hair on the lower legs of some equines (can cover the hooves)
- **FEI:** the international governing body of equestrian sports (Federation Equestre Internationale).
- **Filly:** young female horse < 4 years old

- **Fizzy:** over-exuberant behaviour when being ridden
- **Flat racing:** a race between 2 points on a racetrack (**no** jumps involved)
- **Flying changes:** the horse remains in canter but changes the canter lead in a moment of suspension
- **Forward-going:** a horse with natural energy keen to move with enthusiasm
- **Fresh:** full of energy, playful & feeling good (can be a good or bad thing)
- **Frog:** triangular part of the hoof, located on the underside extending midway from the heel to the toe

G

- **Gait:** the way a horse moves i.e. walk, trot, canter, gallop
- **Gelding:** castrated male horse of any age
- **Girth:** piece of tack that goes under the horse from the saddle to keep it in place
- **Good-doer:** a horse that maintains &/or gains weight easily (typically native breeds)
- **Grass glands:** allergic response at grass causing enlargement of parotid glands e.g. to pollens. May cause unnecessary alarm!
- **Green:** inexperienced or novice horse (often used to describe youngsters)
- **Groundwork:** exercises a handler does with the horse whilst stood on the ground i.e. leading, lunging or long-reining

H

- **Hack/Hacking:** riding a horse on the road or bridle paths/woods etc
- **Hands:** unit of measurement to describe height, from the floor to the highest point of the wither (1 hand = 4 inches). Horses/ponies may also be measured in centimetres (14.2hh = 148cm)
- **Hot:** a horse that is overreactive to aids stimuli, can be difficult/dangerous in the wrong hands
- **Hot blooded:** typically a thoroughbred, although may relate to other breeds originating from the Middle East e.g. Arabs.

I

J

K

- **Knee:** colloquial term often used to describe the carpus

L

- **Long-reining/Long-lining:** a riderless exercise using 2 lunge-lines/ropes attached to the bit, with the handler typically behind the horse
- **Lunge-line:** an 8-10m rope attached to the bridle/head collar to provide control whilst lunging

- **Lunging**: horse is exercised in a circle around a handler (with a 'lunge-line')

M

- **Mare**: female horse > 4 years old
- **Martingale**: '**running**' = piece of tack fastening to the girth, passing between the forelegs & through a loop in a neck strap, that branches to attach to either rein (via metal ring) vs. '**standing**' = attaches directly to noseband
- **Mule**: offspring of a male donkey & a female horse (may also be used in jest to describe a lazy or unwilling horse too!)

N

- **Napping**: reluctance/refusal to move in a direction desired by the handler
- **National Hunt Racing**: required to jump fences & ditches within the race
- **Native**: a breed originating from Britain
- **Near-side**: the left side of the horse (as opposed to off-side).
- **Numnah**: a pad that sits under the saddle to prevent chafing & aid comfort

O

- **Off-side**: the right-side of the horse (as opposed to near-side).

P

- **Pigeon-toed**: a conformational fault where the hooves point outwards

Q

- **Quidding**: horse loses balls of semi-chewed food stuff out of their mouth (most commonly caused by uneven or sharp teeth)

R

- **Rear**: when a horse stands on its back legs in a poorly behaved manner
- **Rein**: Tack used for rider control & also term used for direction the horse is travelling in; **right rein** = travelling in clockwise direction with right-sided limbs & right rein on the inside vs. **left rein** = travelling in anti-clockwise direction with left-sided limbs & left rein on the inside
- **Rig**: A male horse with one or two retained testicles.
- **'Right'/correct leg**: leading foreleg in canter is on the inside of the circle the horse is exercising on

S

- **Season**: mare in the receptive period of her oestrous cycle
- **Scope**: a horse's ability to jump fences easily with little effort & great power

- **Sharp:** full of energy, nervous &/or unpredictable (potentially dangerous!)
- **Shod:** A horse that has been fitted with horseshoes
- **Spooky:** reaction to an object/movement, causing the horse to jump/leap/bolt.
- **Spurs:** metal/plastic attachments to a rider's heels to aid forward movement
- **Stallion:** Entire adult male horse > 4 years old
- **Star:** a white marking between or above the eyes
- **Stirrups:** metal piece of equipment at either side of the saddle, where a rider's foot sits (sometimes plastic or leather)
- **Stripe:** a narrow white marking down the middle of a horse's face
- **Surcingle:** strap/s (often elasticated) used to secure a horse's rug

T

- **Tracking up:** using the hind limbs correctly with the hind hoof landing exactly where the front hoof left off
- **Twitch:** manual restraint technique of a thin rope attached to a pole which is tightly wound round the horse's nose & held for a few minutes ('humane-twitches' also exist & work in a nutcracker like manner on the nose)

U

V

- **Vetting** (*aka pre-purchase examination*): vet performs a clinical exam/series of tests to provide a professional opinion on the health & suitability of a horse before purchase. May be required for insurance purposes (2 or 5 stage option)
- **Vice:** an unwanted behaviour e.g. crib-biting, windsucking, kicking etc.

W

- **Waxing up:** accumulation of colostrum at mares teats indicating foaling is imminent (1-4 days)
- **Weanling:** a foal that has been separated from its mother & no longer has access to milk
- **Windsucking:** horse clamps its mouth onto a surface e.g. door & gulps air
- **Withers:** ridge between the shoulder blades, at the bottom of the neck
- **Wrong leg:** the leading foreleg in canter is on the outside of the circle it is exercising on ('counter canter' desired in advanced dressage/event horses)

X

Y

- **Yearling:** a horse between the age of 1 & 2 years
- **Youngstock:** horses under the age of 4 years old

Z