



Horse Talk

Foal – baby horse

Yearling – horse that is between one and two years old

Filly – young female horse

Mare – female horse

Colt – young male horse

Stallion – male horse

Gelding – male horse that is not used for breeding

Pony – a fully grown small horse

Mustang – wild horse of the Western plains (“Mustang” means ownerless)

Herd – a group of horses

Mane – long heavy hair on the neck and head of a horse

Groom – to clean, bathe, and brush with special tools

Mount – to get into the saddle of a horse by putting a foot in a stirrup and lifting the other leg over the saddle

Tack – brushes, saddles, and other equipment used to ride and care for horses



Horsing Around

Try to guess if these statements about horses are true or false.

1. When a horse is born, its legs are almost their full adult length.
2. Thoroughbred horses all have their birthday on the same day, January 1.
3. Horses usually sleep standing up.
4. Horses can swim.
5. Horses belong to a group called equine or *equus*.

*1. True - Horses are born with legs that are almost their full adult length - giving them that cute "long-legged look" we all love.
 2. True - Having all thoroughbreds' birthdays on the same day makes it easier to keep racing, breeding, and showing records. What would happen if all of your classmates had the same birthday?
 3. True - Horses generally sleep standing up, but spend some time lying down if they feel safe enough.
 4. True - Horses can swim. Many really enjoy the water!
 5. True - The word Equus comes from the Greek word meaning quick. Mules, burros, zebras, and donkeys are also in the equine group.*

ANSWERS:

MARKING MATCH



Sometimes different breeds are the same color, so horse people use white markings on their faces to identify them. All these markings have special names.

- **Star** – found up between the eyes – often a diamond shape.
- **Stripe** – long straight marking down the horse's nose.
- **Race** – long wavy or irregular strip
- **Snip** – small mark on the nose
- **Bald Face** – marking that covers most of the horse's face.
- **Blaze** – broad marking down the front of the horse's face.

See if you can match the marks on the horse to the name. Write the name on the line beneath the horse.

A Horse of a Different Color



There are different breeds of dogs like poodles, collies, and Great Danes. There are different breeds of horses too. In fact, there are more than 150 breeds horses like Belgian, Appaloosa, Clydesdales, Arabian, Shetland Pony, and Morgan.

These breeds can usually be put into one of three types of horses: light horses, heavy horses, and ponies.

- Light horses have small bones, thin legs, and weigh less than 1,300 pounds.
- Heavy horses have large bones, thick legs, and weigh more than 2,000 pounds.
- Ponies are small horses that stand less than 58 inches high when full grown and weigh less than 800 pounds. That's right. Ponies are actually full-grown horses.

There are so many kinds of horses. How can you tell them apart? Just look. Different horses have different colors like brown, black, chestnut, gray, white or any combination of colors.

Light horses



Heavy horses



Ponies



Horses Lend a Helping Hand

Horses have strong teeth, sharp ears, keen eyes, and a good sense of smell. A horse has larger eyes than any other land animal except the ostrich and can move each eye on its own. A horse can look forward with one eye and backward with the other eye. They have wide nostrils to make breathing easy, and also have long, strong legs to pull heavy loads and run really fast.

Early American settlers depended on horses for transportation, to pull heavy wagons, and to help clear the land and plow the fields. Even after we began to use trains to get us places, horses were still needed to power street-cars and fire engines.

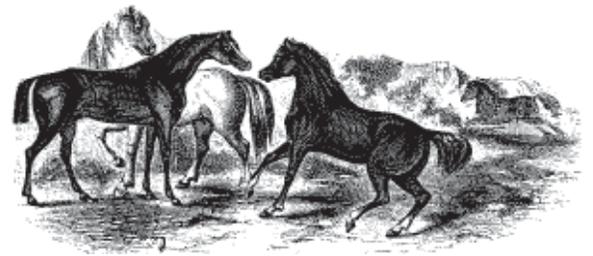
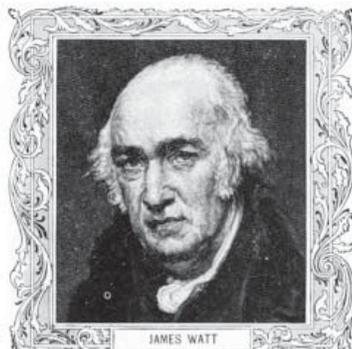
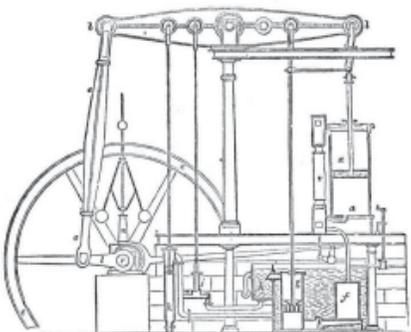


What kind of salad dressing do horses like?

Answer: Ranch, of course!

Engines and Horses Mean Power

There really is no “horse” in horsepower. English engineer James Watt called work that is done by an engine “horsepower.” His experiments proved that a one-horsepower engine could pull twice the weight that a horse could pull in a day. Now you can see why the tractor was so important to farmers!



Wild Mustangs Roam the West

Mustangs are wild-born horses that roam the American West. They often destroy the land around them, so we try to capture them before they do any damage. Then they are put up for adoption.



Hard-working Horses

Farmers used workhorses to pull farm tools over their many fields. It could take as many as six teams of horses to do the work. It took a farmer an hour every morning just to feed and harness the horses before going to work in the fields, and another hour at the end of the day to put them to bed. These hard-working horses needed a lot of fuel, which meant they also ate a lot of the farmer’s crops! Plus, during busy harvest times, a farmer needed extra help from hired hands – sometimes as many as 20 workers. So when the tractor was able to replace mules and horses in the 1930s, it was a big step for agriculture.

Home on the Range

Today, if farmers only had horses to help them in the field, they would need 20 times more horses than we have now, and five times more farm workers. In 1920, it took two men and eight horses to farm 160 acres. Today, one farmer can take care of at least 400 acres by himself.

But we still need horses! In the western states, horses are used on ranches to rope and brand cattle, and to carry cowboys through rough country to round up the herds. Horses are also used by police in large cities like Chicago to patrol busy areas that get clogged with traffic.

People can also ride horses for pleasure or on trails. Horses are specially trained for sports like polo, horse racing and rodeos.

Horses are important to Illinois agriculture. Not for milk, meat, or wool, like other animals. Instead, farmers and ranchers breed, raise, and buy and sell horses just like other livestock.

More on Illinois horses:

1. There are 219,000 horses in Illinois. Most of them are used for show or recreation.
2. 52,000 of them are used for racing.
3. 213,000 people are involved in the horse industry.
4. Illinois' horses are worth \$330 million.
5. 350,000 of us ride horses regularly.
6. They eat 500,000 tons of hay and grain (that costs \$100 million a year).
7. More than 5 million people attend horse races every year. That's more than double professional baseball.



What is a horse's favorite football team?

Answer: The Colts



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