

# Ranch Horse Management Health, Nutrition, and Economics

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## Introduction...

- Ranch Horses vs. Pleasure and Show Horses



## Conformation

- “You can’t ride pretty”
- Choosing the right horse for the right job will minimize injury, minimize maintenance costs, and maximize efficiency



## Conformation

- Face
  - Eyes - large, set on corners of the face
  - Throatlatch – thin
  - Nostrils – wide
- Feet and Legs
  - Sound barefoot
  - Large feet, correct hoof angles
  - Pasterns
  - Knees and hocks close to ground
  - Correct angles to knees and hocks
- Body
  - Shorter back in relation to a longer underline



## Breed Selection

- Florida Cracker Horse
  - Hardiness, longevity, travel, low maintenance
  - Disposition, size
- American Quarter Horse
  - Size, strength, disposition, muscling
  - Travel, lack endurance, often require more maintenance
- Cracker/Quarter Cross
  - Better disposition with thicker muscling and good endurance
  - May have some undesirable traits



## Nutrition

- Diet should be FORAGE based
  - Free choice mineral and fresh water
- Most horses under light-moderate work do not require additional energy in the form of concentrates
  - May need to add concentrate during heavy work
  - Add slowly
- Allow BCS to determine your feeding program
  - 4-5 optimal for working horses

## Body Condition Scores



1-3 – too thin  
Above horse is a 2



4-6 – ideal  
Horse to the right is a 5



7-9 – too fat  
Above horse is a 8.5

## Workload



- Busy times for working cattle
  - Spring, Summer, Fall
  - Horse will be well conditioned during these times
  - Nutrition important
- Slower times of year
  - Keep horse moderately active with other activities
  - Prepare horse for busy times

## Workload

- Be able to recognize signs of exhaustion
  - Horse may appear anxious or nervous
  - Open mouthed breathing
  - Increased capillary refill time and jugular vein refill time
  - Dry mucous membranes and no sweat
  - Irregular pulse and respiratory rate; high and out of rhythm
  - No gut sounds and no anal response
  - Elevated body temperature (Normal 99°-101 °F)

## Workload

- Treating the exhausted horse
  - Stand horse in a cool, shaded area
  - Rinse horse continuously and provide fan if possible
  - Electrolytes: orally or intravenous
  - Allow recovery time after incident
  - Contact your veterinarian if symptoms persist

## Health Management

- What vaccinations does the Florida ranch horse *need*?
  - EWT vaccine: Eastern/Western Encephalomyelitis and Tetanus combo
    - May also get individually as EEE, WEE, Tetanus
  - West Nile vaccine
  - Rabies Vaccine
- Risk based vaccinations
  - Equine Influenza, EHV, Strangles, Rotavirus, Botulism, and Potomac Horse Fever
  - Travelling to events with other horses or to an area of high risk
  - Open vs. closed facilities

## Health Management

- Other maintenance
  - Parasite control
    - De-worming
    - Fly control
  - Hoof care
    - Farrier schedule; “Do it yourself” maintenance
    - Select horses with good feet
  - Wounds and Injuries Common to Ranch Horses
    - Saddle sores and Bit sores
    - Abscesses
    - Tendon problems