



Facilities and Housing: Part One

Life for the horse changed profoundly and forever when the first humans began the process of domestication of the horse for human needs — perhaps more profoundly than we as humans can fully appreciate.

The horse is a herd animal that is designed for long hours of grazing in the great outdoors. Fences, paddocks, stalls, intense housing, controlled breeding and more became increasingly complex as the demands on the horse increased. From a simple “food-producing” animal, to war machine and beast of burden, to the demanding athletic life, the “ask” of the horse is far from natural. As owners of the horse, our responsibility for proper care of our animals has grown as well.

Certainly domestication of the horse and a variety of human uses of the horse have brought many positives to the life of horses as well. These include: better protection, nutrition, and health management.

The role of equine veterinarian developed greatly during wartime as horses became important tools in battle. Welfare of the horse has been better served with increasing knowledge gained by research on health and well-being of the horse on many continents. This research has played a critical role in developing the new standards for care of horses, now outlined in the new Code of Practice for horses in Canada.

It is well known that management practices can greatly affect the health and welfare of horses and can be the cause many conditions. Section two of the Code outlines the consensus and evidence-based recommendations for standards and “best practices” for our domestic horses, with the goal of preventing many of the common health problems associated with different housing practices.

The horse industry of today has changed greatly as have our expectations of the horse and its role in our society. Societal expectations have also changed with respect to our management practices and the responsibility for supporting equine welfare and preventing pain, illness and suffering. A strong knowledge of management and disease prevention is the first step to implementing high standards of care for the horses in our care, whether it be the backyard horse or high level athlete.



We must all be familiar with our new Code of Practice and the standards set out in this document.

Learn more about the Equine Code of Practice – visit – [Facilities and Housing](#)

Stay tuned for more about Facilities and Housing in the April e-news.

Sign up for our [free e-newsletter](#) which will deliver monthly welfare tips throughout 2015 and announce tools to aid all horse owners in carrying out their ‘Full-Circle-Responsibility’ to our beloved horses.

In partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Equine Guelph is developing a ‘Full-Circle-Responsibility’ equine welfare educational initiative which stands to benefit the welfare of horses in both the racing and non- racing sectors.