



Millbrook, NY

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Tips for Caring for the Older Horse

Due to advances in nutrition, stable management and health care, horses are living longer, more useful lives. While genetics play a role in determining life span, equine care can have an impact.

You may think that turning your old horse out to pasture is the kindest form of retirement but, keep in mind that horses are individuals. Some enjoy being idle; others prefer to be a part of the action. Whatever you do, don't ignore your horse. Proper nutrition, care and exercise will help the animal thrive.

These guidelines, in conjunction with your veterinarian, can help you to develop a management plan for your older horse:

- Keep your veterinarian's name and contact information handy. Consider a stall plaque providing the information to the stable. **Dr. Vin** at the **Center for Veterinary Care** can be reached by calling **(845) 677-8800**.
- Observe your horse on a regular basis. Watch for changes in body condition, behavior and attitude. Address problems, even seemingly minor ones, right away.
- Feed a high quality diet. Avoid dusty and moldy feeds. Feed at more frequent intervals so as not to upset the digestive system. Two-three times daily is often ideal. Remember to feed your older horse away from younger, more aggressive ones so it won't have to compete for feed.
- Provide plenty of fresh, clean, tepid water. Excessively cold water reduces consumption which can lead to colic and other problems.
- Adjust and balance rations to maintain proper body conditions. A good rule of thumb is that you should be able to feel the horse's ribs but not see them.
- Provide adequate, appropriate exercise to maintain muscle tone, flexibility and mobility.
- Groom your horse frequently to promote circulation and skin health.
- Be aware that older horses are prone to tumors. Look for any unusual lumps or growths from head to tail as well as beneath the tail (especially on gray horses).
- Schedule routine checkups with your equine veterinarian. Call immediately if you suspect a problem. **Dr. Vin** can be reached on **(845) 677-8800**.

A quick response to ailments, injuries or a decline in fitness can keep your older horse from having a serious or prolonged setback. That means less worry for you and a better quality of life for your old friend. For more information about caring for your older horse, contact **Dr. Vin** at the **Center for Veterinary Care** in Millbrook, NY. **(845) 677-8800** or visit the AAEP's horse health web site, www.myHorseMatters.com.

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