

The background of the entire page is a photograph of two brown horses grazing in a field of tall grass. The horses are positioned in the lower half of the frame. Behind them is a dense line of green trees under a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

KEEPING YOUR HORSE AT HOME: Beginners Quick Guide

What You Need To Know To Keep
Your Horse Healthy and Happy On
Your Own Property

Anne Gage

Author of *Confident Rider Confident Horse*

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have found your equine partner and are looking forward to spending many happy years together.

I have written this guide for horse owners who are considering or have recently decided to keep their horses on their own farm or acreage instead of at a boarding stable. The tips outlined in this guide are intended to help you decide whether having your horse at home is the best decision for you and your horse, reduce the stress for both of you and get your new partnership off on the right foot.

Confident Horsemanship

Putting you & your horse in good hands.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is the second in a series of books that I have written as a guide for people who want to enjoy a true partnership with a horse or horses.

It was written for the person who wants to be a true horse person; because there is a difference between being a horse owner and being a true horse person.

Being a true horse person is not based only on riding ability. A true horse person is someone who understands what the horse needs to be physically and mentally healthy, and is able to provide those necessities.

A true horse person knows her horse so well that she can tell when her horse is injured or ill and is able to take whatever action is in the best interests of the horse.

A true horse person puts his horse's needs and well being before his own. He never asks the horse for more than he is able to give.

Having a love of horses is not enough to make you a true horse person. Simply spending time with horses is not enough. Being a true horse person comes from understanding what makes horses tick – their psychology, bio-mechanics, and herd dynamics – as well as what they need to be well adjusted, healthy and happy.

This understanding comes from continually learning and acquiring more knowledge. That knowledge can come from a variety of resources:

Listening to and working with experienced horse people such as coaches, trainers, clinicians and other equine professionals

Practical experiences such as lessons, workshops and clinics.

Research and studying courses, books, and videos.

After you have found your [dream horse](#), your next priority is to provide the best possible care for her. And, while looking after your own horse at your own farm is an immensely fulfilling experience, it also requires a lot of commitment and hard work.

This book prepares you for that commitment and offers suggestions for ways to make the experience as positive and rewarding as possible ... for you as well as for your horse.

THE REAL COST OF KEEPING YOUR HORSE AT HOME

The initial price of buying your horse is just the first drop in the bucket. A tiny drop in a very big bucket. The biggest expense will be buying a property where you can keep your horses. Of course, if you already have a suitable property, that is taken care of. While that saves you the expense of paying monthly boarding fees, there are many more expenses you will have looking after your horse yourself.

Costs will vary depending on your location, the size of your property and the number of horses you are keeping. Use the following information as a guideline for what you need to include in your horse keeping budget. Then do the research for the typical costs in your area.

PASTURE. Good quality forage (grass or hay) is the most important part of your horse's diet. If you are fortunate to live in an area with plentiful pasture that is suitable for horses and available year round, you may not need to supplement your horse's diet with hay or grain based feeds.

The basic rule of thumb is to have at least one acre of pasture per horse. You may need more space depending on local zoning by-laws as well as the type of soil and climate in your area.

A good pasture has a mix of grasses (timothy, fescue, orchard grass, etc.) and legumes. The type of mix depends on the type of soil type (i.e. loam, clay or sand) the amount of rain, and whether your area is prone to seasonal droughts. Your local farm supply store can recommend a suitable mix. Just be sure you let them know that you are growing grass for horses not cows.

Horses prefer leafy grass that is 10-15 cm (4-6 in) tall. Grass becomes tough and difficult to chew and digest once it is past the leafy stage. If your paddock grass grows more quickly than your horses can eat it, you will need to mow it to the ideal 10-15 cm (4-6 in) height.

Horses are non-stop grazers. They will eat good grass down to nothing denuding parts of their paddock while allowing weeds flourish. They will not eat anything in their toilet area. So, keeping your pasture healthy enough to sustain your horse requires regular maintenance such as:

Removing manure regularly (the smaller the area the more frequently this needs to be done);

Bush hogging (cutting down) to remove weeds before they go to seed;

Rotating paddocks to allow rest periods for re-growth;

Re-seeding and fertilizing at least annually.

All this care takes time and money. If you don't have your own equipment or the time, you will need to hire someone to do the work for you.

HAY. Your horse will need his diet supplemented with good quality hay when quality pasture is not available. Depending on body type and workload, the average horse needs about 1.5 – 2.5% of his body weight per day in hay if he is not on quality pasture. For a 1000 lb horse, that is between 15 and 25 lb of hay daily. The average small square bale weighs about 40 lbs.

Small square hay bales range in price from \$3.50/bale up to over \$10/bale depending on time of year, available supply and geographical location.

Use the following formula to estimate the hay cost for an average horse (based on needing 20 lbs of hay/day and using 40 lb bale):

$\text{\$cost/bale} \times \frac{1}{2} \text{ bale} \times 365 \text{ days} = \text{\$cost/horse/year}$

FEED AND SUPPLEMENTS. The quality of pasture and hay varies greatly based on location, time of year and weather. To ensure your horse is getting all the essential elements he needs, you may also need to include processed feed and/or supplements to his diet.

You can get advice from a qualified equine nutritionist about what your horse needs based on his body type, age and workload. The nutritionist should visit your farm to evaluate your horses' condition and gather relevant information about them. He or she will then design a feed program to suit the individual needs of each of your horses.

Most feed companies employ equine nutritionists who provide this service for free. They will then recommend the most appropriate feeds from that company's products. There are also independent equine nutritionists who charge a fee for their service but can recommend a broader range of options.

End of sample of this eBook

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