

Sample Inspection Checklist

Animal control officers (ACO's) may deal with hundreds of dogs and cats each week but may not have the training or knowledge to objectively assess a horse's health and well-being, let alone determine why a horse is emaciated or lethargic, for example. Therefore, it's imperative that ACO's arm themselves with as much knowledge as possible. That way, in addition to being able to spot neglect, they will know better how to fix the situation in order to ensure the horse's improved care.

Don't be afraid to ask the ACO to take note of the following before he or she investigates. (Suggest that the ACO take a camera along and offer to fax or e-mail him or her the checklist below as well as the Henneke Body Condition Scoring Sheet.) When you call back to find out the results of the investigation, have this list on hand so you can record the ACO's reported observations; your documentation will come in handy should you pursue the matter further.

■ A thorough ACO will look for these possible signs of neglect:

- no shelter
- debris or more than five droppings in a stall
- ammonia fumes or urine stench in the stall (damages lungs, causes thrush)
- hay stored near the stall (causes respiratory problems)
- walnut shavings for bedding (toxic)
- chew marks on the stall (indicates starvation)
- limited access to a water tank (pasture-kept horses) or a bucket or automatic waterer (stall-kept horses)
- algae, debris, or small animals in the water
- hay that is yellow, dusty, moldy, or smelly or that contains fine dust, flakes, or clumps of plant matter (causes colic, respiratory problems, starvation)
- foul-smelling black discharge coming from the horse's hooves (indicates thrush)
- pebbles or debris in the foot (causes bruising)
- overgrown, untrimmed hooves
- sharp, pointy teeth (painful, leads to refusal to eat)
- unstable, weak fences
- a lethargic, limping, or bony horse (must conduct Henneke Body Condition Scoring System)

■ A thorough ACO will ask:

- to see feed receipts (taking into account any other horses on the property who are sharing or competing for hay)
- to contact the horse's veterinarian (to verify regular tooth care, inoculations, and parasite control)
- to contact the horse's farrier (to verify regular reshoeing and/or hoof trimming)
- how often water tanks, buckets, or automatic waterers are cleaned
- how much the horse eats each day and what dietary supplements are being given
- how often the manure pile is disposed of
- how much exercise and fresh air a stall-kept horse receives
- for the horse's age and health history (to verify with veterinarian)