

# THE MANAGEMENT OF EXTENSIVELY KEPT EQUIDS

## EQUIDS IN NATURE CONSERVATION PROJECT

In recent years, the use of horses and ponies has gained widespread popularity due to their potential to regulate vegetation and restore natural ecosystems.

These equids are typically kept in groups, allowed to roam freely across large areas and forage on a diverse variety of vegetation. This way of living meets important, natural behavioural needs of horses.

However, there are also welfare risks as outlined on the right.

## THESE ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE IF LEFT UNRESOLVED

- ✗ Emaciation or obesity
- ✗ Persistent social isolation or aggressive behaviour
- ✗ Signs of disease, pain or discomfort
- ✗ No shelter (either natural or artificial)
- ✗ No dry areas for resting and lying
- ✗ Deep mud in feeding/drinking areas
- ✗ In-breeding
- ✗ Hazardous/poorly visible fencing e.g. barbed wire
- ✗ Insufficient inspection of all equids



All equids should have continuous access to drinking water of good quality. Rainwater and snow are not sufficient to provide for the needs of extensively-kept equids.



## IS SHELTER REQUIRED?



Horses should have access to secure, dry resting and lying areas – if not they may suffer from sleep deprivation and compromised welfare. Horses need to lie down to complete a full sleep cycle. If natural conditions do not provide horses with a dry lying area, they should have access to an artificial shelter.

Conditions should provide seasonal protection against insects, predators, sun, rain and wind arising from all directions.

## WHICH HORSE BREEDS ARE SUITABLE?



Horses that are kept outside year round should be **adapted to the local conditions**, e.g. have a full, dense hair coat without bare spots, be in good body condition, and generally robust and healthy.

Suitable breeds include Konik, Exmoor, Przewalski, Icelandic horses and Shetland ponies.



## IS THE AREA SUITABLE FOR HORSES?

The enclosure should include grass-covered areas with zones around feeding/drinking places free from deep mud. Water-logged areas, as here, should not comprise the majority of the enclosure.



Produced by the **Voluntary Initiative on the Welfare of Equids** under the **EU Platform on Animal Welfare**