

LEARNING AREA: DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGIES

# Thoroughbred Nutrition, Behaviour, and Handling





# Thoroughbred Nutrition, Behaviour, and Handling

Understanding the nutritional requirements, behavioural indicators, and safe handling practices of horses is important for anyone working in the thoroughbred industry. These factors impact the health, performance, and welfare of the horses and the safety of the people working with them.



## Nutritional requirements of thoroughbred horses

A ration is the type and amount of feed a thoroughbred horse receives daily, designed to meet its specific nutritional needs, whether the horse is actively racing or off the track. The amount and type of feed a thoroughbred horse needs depend on factors such as its age, physiological state, and energy requirements. When thoroughbreds are racing, their diets must provide all the nutrients required for optimal performance. During pregnancy, broodmares need additional vitamins and minerals to ensure the healthy development of their foals, while thoroughbreds who have retired from racing require less protein in their diets due to their reduced energy needs. The nutrients in a thoroughbred feed ration perform different functions in their bodies:

- **Carbohydrates** from concentrates such as oats, barley or corn **provide energy** which is particularly important to sustain the high energy requirements of training and racing.
- **Fats** help to store energy and are important for body warmth.
- **Proteins** are important for muscle repair and growth. Proteins also support the horse's overall physical development and recovery after intense exercise. Concentrates such as oats, barley, or corn are the primary source of protein in a thoroughbred horse's ration.
- **Vitamins** are organic compounds needed in small quantities to support essential bodily functions, including immune responses and metabolic processes.
- **Minerals** are inorganic elements necessary for strong bones, teeth, and muscle function, as well as overall health.
- **Fibre** from roughage such as hay, pasture and chaff help the digestive system to function properly which can prevent digestive illnesses such as colic and diarrhoea.

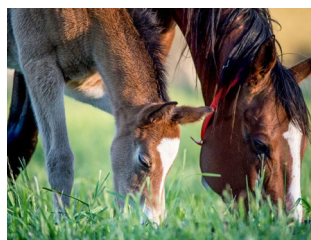
## Thoroughbred behaviour

Observing the behaviours of thoroughbred horses can help assess their health and temperament. Understanding horse behaviours and what they mean helps people working with thoroughbreds to better care for the horses and keep themselves safe. Observing and knowing what normal behaviour looks like for each individual horse allows for quicker detection of unusual behaviours, which could indicate if a horse is injured, unwell or distressed.



A horse's body language, particularly the position of its ears, eyes, and tail, can signal how it is feeling. Ears pointed forward indicate curiosity or alertness, while ears pinned back can be a sign of anger or discomfort. A relaxed horse might have its tail hanging loosely, while a horse that's swishing its tail rapidly might be annoyed. Recognising these behaviours helps people working in the thoroughbred industry to make informed decisions about the needs of the horses as well as the handling practices needed to keep themselves and the horse safe.

Horses are herd animals that feel safe and comfortable when they have the company of other horses. In a paddock, they often stand close together, groom each other, and follow one another around. A horse that changes its behaviour by isolating itself or showing reluctance to eat might be sick, distressed, or experiencing discomfort. Movement is another important indicator of the health and temperament of a thoroughbred. Horses that suddenly become less active or spend lots of time lying down, may be injured or unwell. Stud hands and managers observe the temperament, feeding habits, and behaviours of the horses on their farms twice each day to ensure they are safe and healthy.



Scan the QR code or click on the link to hear Dr Fiona Lacey explain the significance of observing normal behaviour in horses.

**Observing Normal Behaviour (2:25)**

<https://shorturl.at/pl1co>

## Handling thoroughbreds safely

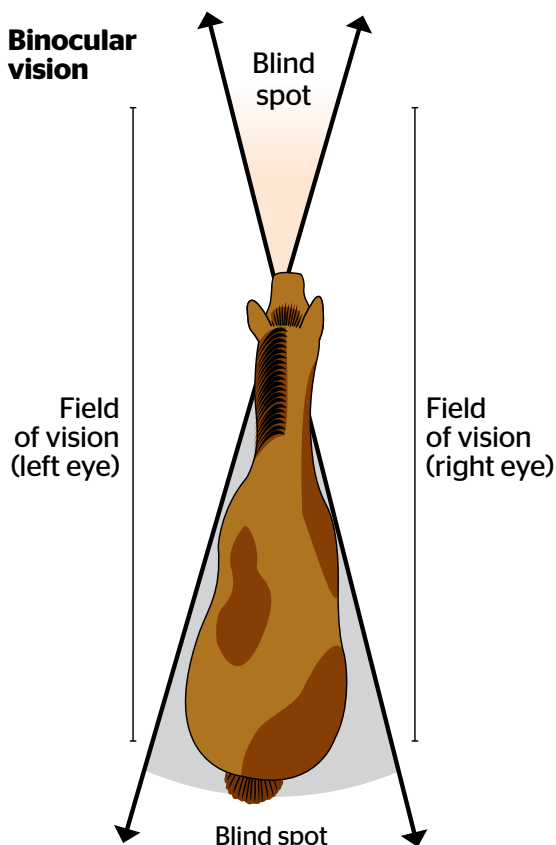
Because of their size and strength, safe handling practices are extremely important when working with thoroughbred horses. These practices are used to protect both the horse and the handler from injury and stress, prevent behavioural issues, and fulfil legal and ethical responsibilities for animal welfare.

Safe practices, such as approaching the horse from a visible angle, avoiding blind spots, and using equipment correctly, make thoroughbred industry workplaces safer and more efficient.

Everyone working directly with thoroughbreds, including handlers, trainers, and owners, are responsible for adopting safe handling practices. Learning these practices can involve formal education, hands-on experience through apprenticeships or volunteering, and continuous learning through online resources, workshops, or webinars to stay updated with the latest best practices.

## Thoroughbred blind spots

An important aspect of handling thoroughbreds is understanding their blind spots. Blind spots are areas where horses cannot see. These blind spots are directly behind them and directly in front of their faces, which affects how people should safely approach and handle them.



Scan the QR code or click on the link to view the source material about blind spots.

**TBA Learning - What Are Blind Spots? (3:03)**

<https://vimeo.com/800674434>

People working with thoroughbreds should make their presence known before approaching horses by talking to them, or making other gentle noises to ensure they are awake and alert, preventing them from being taken by surprise. When approaching it is important to consider a horse's blind spots and move towards it from in front of its shoulders, where the horse can see them clearly. Approaching a horse from behind is dangerous, as it may be startled and kick.

## Thoroughbred nutrition, behaviour, and handling Response task

**a) Identify the seven nutritional components of a thoroughbred horse's ration.**



Scan the QR code or click on the link to access the Chris Waller Racing website. Scroll down the page to access **The Feeding Program video** (4:49) to learn about the nutritional components of a racehorse's ration.



**The Feeding Program Video (4:49)**

<https://cwallerracing.com/life-of-a-thoroughbred/>

**b) Record the types of feed identified by Chris Waller used in the rations for his racehorses.**

**c) Explain why feed rations of thoroughbred horses are individualised to each horse.**

**d) Explain why is it important to observe the normal behaviour of thoroughbred horses.**



## Thoroughbred handling Guided research task

e) Click on the links or use the QR codes to access source materials about safe handling practices in the Australian thoroughbred industry. **As you watch the videos, record the name and key things to remember for each of the safe handling practices in a workbook or digital document.**

1



### TBA Learning - Approaching The Horse (3:34)

<https://shorturl.at/3wnyL>



2



### TBA Learning - Catching A Horse In A Stable (3:09)

<https://vimeo.com/773173238>



3



### TBA Learning - Holding The Lead Rein (1:18)

<https://vimeo.com/773520012>



4



### TBA Learning - Letting A Horse Go In A Stable (2:04)

<https://vimeo.com/773564593>

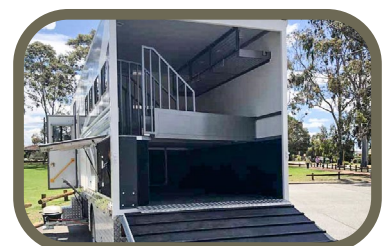


5



### TBA Learning - Loading Horses On The Truck (3:17)

<https://shorturl.at/DCWTE>



## Learning Area | Australian Curriculum Content:

### Design and Technologies

Analyse how people in design and technologies occupations consider ethical and sustainability factors to design and produce products, services and environments (AC9TDE8K01)

Analyse how people in design and technologies occupations consider ethical, security and sustainability factors to innovate and improve products, services and environments (AC9TDE10K01)

## ATTRIBUTION, CREDIT & SHARING

This resource was produced by Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) in collaboration with Thoroughbred Breeders Australia. Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia's resources support and facilitate effective teaching and learning about Australia's food and fibre industries. We are grateful for the support of our industry and member organisations for assisting in our research efforts and providing industry-specific information and imagery to benefit the development and accuracy of this educational resource.

While reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the contents of this educational resource are factually correct, PIEFA and Thoroughbred Breeders Australia do not accept responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the contents and shall not be liable for any loss or damage that may be occasioned directly or indirectly from using, or reliance on, the contents of this educational resource.

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