YEAR 3-4 | STUDENT FACT SHEET

LEARNING AREAS: SCIENCE, MATHEMATICS, ENGLISH

The Life Cycle of Thoroughbred Horses

Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia

TBA Thoroughbred Breeders Australia

The Life Cycle of Thoroughbred Horses

As thoroughbred horses age during their life cycle, they change in size (height, weight, and width), can produce offspring, and can train and compete in races. Horses' teeth also change as they grow older.

People working with thoroughbreds, such as breeders, trainers, vets and jockeys, group the animals into categories based on their ages (like how schools group students into different year levels based on their age) to help to train them, care for them, and meet their needs at the different stages of their lives.

In the Southern Hemisphere, all horses celebrate their birthday on the 1st of August (even if they are born on different dates during the year). This makes it easier for people who race and breed horses to keep track of their ages. It helps organise horse races and ensures fair competition because horses of the same age race together. It also helps breeders plan when to have new foals, so they are born at the best time of year. This shared birthday keeps everything simple and organised. In the Northern Hemisphere, all horses celebrate their birthday on the 1st of January. (Thoroughbred Breeders Australia, 2024)

Subzero, Melbourne Cup winner celebrating his 28th birthday.

The life cycle of a thoroughbred horse

Read the information to learn about the needs and characteristics of thoroughbred horses at each of the stages of their life cycle.

Foal (0 – 6 months) A baby thoroughbred is called a foal from birth until it is about six months old or until it is weaned (doesn't need milk anymore) from its mother. Foals drink milk from their mothers and stay close to them for safety as they learn to run and play. Like human babies, foals are usually born with no teeth but begin to grow baby teeth (milk teeth) as they get older. People gently handle foals to get them used to human contact.

Weanling (6 months – 1 year) A thoroughbred horse is called a weanling from around six months old until its first birthday on the 1st of August. Weanlings have grown all of their milk teeth, so they stop drinking milk from their mothers and start eating solid foods (like grass, hay, and grains). They are moved into a paddock with other weanlings to become more independent. Regular vet checkups are important to make sure they are healthy. Trainers work with weanlings to teach them to wear a halter and walk on a lead rope, which helps them become more comfortable working with humans.

Yearling (1 – 2 years) A thoroughbred horse is a one-year-old or a yearling from the 1st of August in their first year of life until the 1st of August the next year. Yearlings continue to grow and develop stronger muscles. They need a balanced diet to help them grow, as well as regular grooming and dental care. Yearlings work with their trainers to start to learn to carry a saddle and wear a bridle, follow riding instructions, and do some riding.

Two-year-old (2–3 years) A thoroughbred becomes a two-year-old on the 1st of August of its second year of life. At this age, they look more like adult horses but are still growing. Thoroughbreds can begin to start racing when they are two years old. They need a nutritious diet, regular training, and vet checkups to stay healthy and fit for racing. The horse's milk teeth begin to fall out and are replaced by permanent teeth when they are about two and a half years old. Between two and four years old, a female thoroughbred is called a filly, while a male thoroughbred is called a colt.

Adult (3 years and older) Adult thoroughbreds are fully grown. They are strong and fast, with a shiny coat. To stay healthy, adult horses need a balanced diet, regular exercise, and regular vet checkups. They work with trainers and jockeys for daily training to prepare for races and keep fit and healthy.

Sires and Broodmares Adult horses in the thoroughbred industry have different names depending on their roles. A sire is a horse's father, and a broodmare or dam is the mother. In Australia's thoroughbred breeding industry, the horses that will become sires and broodmares (produce offspring) are chosen for their special characteristics including how well they can race and the size and shape of their bodies. When these horses reproduce, they pass some of these special characteristics onto their foals to continue to produce fast, healthy racehorses for the future. Other names for adult horses include mare (female) and stallion or gelding (male).

Thoroughbred breeders select the male and female horses that will produce foals each year. These sires (male horses) and broodmares (female horses) begin to reproduce at three years old. Broodmares are pregnant for approximately eleven months. During this time, they need special care.

Answer the questions to show what you know about the life cycle of thoroughbred horses.

a) Why do people working with thoroughbred horses group them into categories based on their age?

b) When do all horses in the Southern Hemisphere celebrate their birthday?

c) What happens to a horse's teeth when a thoroughbred is two and a half years old?

d) Why are sires and broodmares so important to Australia's thoroughbred breeding industry?

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The life cycle of a thoroughbred flip book

- Foals drink milk from their mothers.
- Foals are born with no teeth but begin to grow baby teeth (milk teeth) as they get older.
- People gently handle foals to get them used to human contact.

1 **Foal (0-6 months)**

GLUE OR STAPLE HERE

2

GLUE OR STAPLE HERE

3

1. Record the name, age, and up to three facts about each of the stages of the thoroughbred life cycle into the flip book sections in order (1-5).
2. Paste the matching images into the sections to show how a thoroughbred changes from a baby to an adult.

   The first stage of the life cycle has been completed for you.
3. Cut out the boxes and glue or staple them in order (one on top of the other from 1-5) to create a life cycle flip book.

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GLUE OR STAPLE HERE

4

GLUE OR STAPLE HERE

5

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How fast does a foal grow?

Use the information in the columns to work out how heavy a foal is when it is six weeks old.

Add the weight gains each week to calculate the total weight.

Time (weeks)	Weight gain (kg)	Total weight (kg)
0	birth weight 50	50
1	gains 11	50 + 11= ____
2	gains 11	____ + 11 = ____
3	gains 11	____ + 11 = ____
4	gains 11	____ + 11 = ____
5	gains 11	____ + 11 = ____
6	gains 11	____ + 11 = ____

Learning Areas | Australian Curriculum Content

Science
Observe external features of plants and compare characteristics of living and non-living things and examine the differences between the life cycles of plants and animals (AC9S3U01)

Mathematics
Recognise and explain the connection between addition and subtraction as inverse operations, apply to partition numbers and find unknown values in number sentences (AC9M3A01)

Find unknown values in numerical equations involving addition and subtraction, using the properties of numbers and operations (AC9M4A01)

English
Read a range of texts using phonic, semantic and grammatical knowledge to read accurately and fluently, re-reading and self-correcting when required (AC9E3LY04)

Use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features (AC9E3LY05)

Read different types of texts, integrating phonic, semantic and grammatical knowledge to read accurately and fluently, re-reading and self-correcting when needed (AC9E4LY04)

Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, to expand topic knowledge and ideas, and evaluate texts (AC9E4LY05)

ATTRIBUTION, CREDIT and SHARING

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