

Contact Details

Forestry Commission

The Queen's House, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO43 7NH

For more information about the New Forest

please visit www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest or call the Forestry Commission on **023 8028 3141** (24hr in case of emergency)

New Forest Ponies

Look, but don't touch

A short guide



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Working at the heart of the New Forest National Park

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Admire from a safe distance

The New Forest Pony is part of the traditional Forest scene and has been for more than a thousand years. They are an even-tempered animal, making them a good choice as a child's pony. However what many people don't know is that, though owned, they are all left to live as if wild while out on the Forest. They are watched over and cared for, but live naturally finding their own food, water and shelter from the elements. It is not surprising then that of the nearly 4000 ponies, some have developed behaviour that is unpredictable and sometimes dangerous, especially to young children.

Feeding ponies

Dangerous for you and dangerous for them

Feeding and petting ponies encourages them to behave badly – pestering picnickers and hanging around busy roads and car parks. This increases the chances of them causing harm to children and makes them more likely to be killed or injured by cars.

Human food can cause severe colic and could KILL ponies

Because of the obvious attraction to people and their food, some ponies will spend a lot of time at the places popular with visitors. They may bring their foals with them and just like us, ponies are extremely protective of their young.

Watch for the signs

A short lesson in pony body language

Watch the ears!

The commonest sign that a pony is agitated by you is the 'ear threat', where the ears are held back towards the neck. If you see this move away and the pony will calm down.

Watch the nose!

If you ignore the ear threat, it may be repeated with more intensity as the animal gets really annoyed. Then, the mouth may open slightly, the nose wrinkle and the nostrils flare, with a sharp raising of the head. The pony is really angry now! Back off immediately – the pony can only defend itself by biting or kicking.

Help us look after the well being of the ponies and look after yourself by admiring them without getting too close