

# New Forest Fact File

## HISTORY AND HERITAGE NEW FOREST PONIES

There have been ponies in the New Forest at least since medieval times. They were domestic animals doing the work of the smallholdings and serving as beasts of burden, and by common right were turned out to graze the Open Forest. It is their close-cropping of the grass during the summer and their browsing of the gorse and holly in winter that has shaped the look of the Forest today.

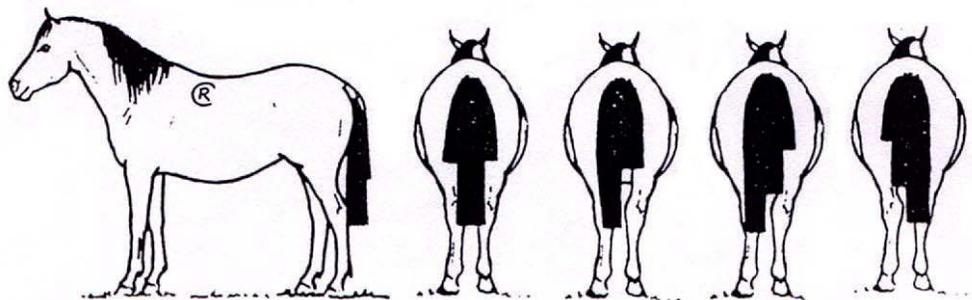
The New Forest pony has developed as a breed adapted to the requirements and conditions of life in the Forest. It is light and sure-footed to move through the mires and thick scrub, hardy for over-wintering in the open and it has developed a hairy face and horny tongue to cope with its prickly winter diet. It became known as a good children's pony in the reign of James I and that is its principle use today.

Although free to wander across the whole Forest, pony groups tend to remain in the same area, known as their haunt or run. The size of the haunt varies but it must contain the four necessities of life for the ponies: food, shelter, water and shade. Shading occurs on warm summer days, when quite large groups collect in traditional places, usually in the open and often across public roads to escape, it is said, the attentions of biting insects.

No pony may be depastured (put out to graze) on the Forest unless it is branded with its owner's mark. A fee must be paid every year for each animal, collected by the Agisters for the Court of Verderer's to use to defray the cost of supervising and controlling the animals. At present the marking fee is £20 and the Agisters mark the pony's tail by cutting the long hair in his individual pattern as proof of payment.

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W	Ⓢ	B7	DB
Ⓜ	FV	F3	C7
FAB	DOC	/+	W

BRANDING



TAIL MARKINGS

The New Forest Pony is a registered breed and only suitable sound registered stallions are allowed on the Forest, although any mare may be turned out providing her colts are removed before they are old enough to breed.

Pony sales take place in April, then from August through to December at Beaulieu Road Station. The ponies are rounded up by the commoners, who take part in the 'drift' on horseback, driven into the pound, wormed to free them from parasites, then those to be sold or wintered on the holdings are loaded into lorries and trailers.

The Forest is full of hazards for these sturdy creatures - bogs, ditches, litter, ragwort, even acorns, which eaten in excess cause colic, but none is more lethal than modern road traffic. Visitors do the ponies no favours by feeding them and so drawing them to the roadside. In 1964, 1967 and 1975 the A31, A35 and A337 respectively were fenced in an attempt to reduce road casualties, and in 1990 in the North and 1992 in the South of the Forest, a 40 MPH speed limit was introduced. The use of reflective collars on ponies was another measure taken to reduce the number of accidents involving ponies. This was first tried in the 1950s then again in the 1980s and it has been brought back into use today by some commoners. Despite these measures 74 ponies were killed and 8 were injured on the roads in 2003.

**The ponies themselves can also prove a hazard to visitors who try to pet them, and they should be left strictly alone.**

Further information is available from:

[www.verderers.org.uk](http://www.verderers.org.uk)

The New Forest Verderer's official Website

[www.newforestpony.com](http://www.newforestpony.com)

New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society.

Formed for the recording and promotion of the best type of New Forest Ponies in the UK and around the world.

[www.newforestcommoners.co.uk](http://www.newforestcommoners.co.uk)

The New Forest Commoners Defence Association.

Protecting the interests and rights of the New Forest commoners.

[www.newforestpony.co.uk](http://www.newforestpony.co.uk)

The New Forest Equine Directory.

Including sections for: The New Forest Pony Publicity Group, New Forest Equestrian Association and The New Forest Pony Enthusiasts Club.



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