

## Facilities and Housing Part 2



By far the most important influencer of a horse's care is the overall management by the owner and caretaker and the facilities play a critical role. In fact it has been reported that 80% of colic episodes are management-related and many veterinarians will point to management issues that contributed to the development of respiratory and hoof issues as well. So our "duty of care" requires that we become knowledgeable about the requirements for horse facilities and housing management in a defined way that supports horse welfare and health. With basic knowledge, the horse owner can prevent many problems from happening and stop the progression of many more.

This is not to say that all horse facilities must look like the high end stables we admire in the equine magazines. Quite the contrary as modest facilities with a little work can be as healthy (and sometimes healthier) for horses when attention is paid to the priorities. As caretakers we need to balance the needs of the horse with our needs for convenience and cost effectiveness.

There is plenty of evidence linking the development of abnormal behaviours as coping mechanisms in horses confined to stalls with limited access to "friends, forage and freedom". Preventing normal horse behavior such as moving around in a herd with access to forage day and night results in higher stress levels and a much greater chance of developing the aforementioned stereotypies, thus compromising welfare.

Section two of the Code of Practice about Facilities and Housing deserves thorough review, as it forms an important foundation for our horse keeping activities. The housing of horses plays a major role in their welfare, and the prevention of many health and behavioural issues. The knowledgeable horse person learns about good "stockmanship" or the care of their animals and provides facilities that support the needs of horse.

We must all be familiar with our new Code of Practice and the standards set out in this document.

Learn more about the Equine Code of Practice – visit – [Facilities and Housing](#)

Sign up for our [free e-newsletter](#) which will deliver monthly welfare tips throughout 2015 and announce tools to aid all horse owners in carrying out their 'Full-Circle-Responsibility' to our beloved horses.

In partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Equine Guelph is developing a 'Full-Circle-Responsibility' equine welfare educational initiative which stands to benefit the welfare of horses in both the racing and non- racing sectors.