



Cattle, Fritham



Pony grazing in evening light, Crockford Clump

Commoning past and present

The New Forest ponies, cattle, pigs and donkeys you can see in the National Park are all owned by people known as commoners.

The practice of turning out animals to graze on the Forest is called commoning. This tradition has survived through the commitment of commoners and continues to shape the open landscape you see today.



◀ The rights of common

Rights of common were once enjoyed across most of Britain. In the New Forest, the rights are not attached to individuals or families, but to land defined in Forest acts.



◀ Common of mast

The right to turn out pigs during the autumn, or pannage season. The pigs eat fallen beech-mast and acorns which are poisonous to ponies.



◀ Brands and markings

Ponies are rounded up each year in 'drifts'. Each animal's health is checked and new foals are branded. The ponies' tails are cut to show that a fee has been paid.

Common of marl ▶

The right to take marl or clay from Forest pits is no longer practised. It was used to improve agricultural land and for building.



Common of pasture ▶

The right to graze cattle, ponies and donkeys. There are about 7,000 animals turned out onto the Forest under this right.

Common of estover

The right to collect wood for fuel. Today, Forestry Commission staff cut and stack wood for those eligible.



Common of sheep

The right to depasture sheep is no longer used very widely.

Common of turbary

The right to cut turf is no longer practised.

Please help look after these Forest animals: Slow down when driving by; they can be unpredictable! Don't feed the ponies, however friendly they seem to be!

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