



Ponies are ... a New Forest tradition



- The ponies, donkeys and cattle create our New Forest
- Dozens of rare plants and animals rely on their grazing to survive
- Every pony you see belongs to someone
- They are 'farm' animals grazing on the open heath
- They are beautiful, but they are not tame

Look from a safe distance!

- Most ponies and donkeys are not used to being handled and are happier left alone. They can react very suddenly if they feel threatened.
- Ponies and donkeys live naturally in the New Forest. There is plenty of natural food for them.
- If they are attracted to car parks and roadsides by the offer of food they are at greater risk of being hit on the road.
- Keep yourself safe. Every year a few people are hurt by ponies or donkeys that have learned to expect food or are protecting their foals. Children are especially vulnerable.
- Feeding ponies or donkeys in the New Forest is against the local bylaws and you could be fined.

PLEASE DO NOT TRY TO FEED OR PET OUR ANIMALS

New Forest Pony FAQs

Did you know that...

- Around 5000 ponies live in the New Forest spending their time grazing naturally on the heaths and in the woods.
- Most of the ponies you see are registered New Forest ponies, which is a native breed on the 'at risk' register. There are a few Shetlands, and others are 'unregistered' breeds, but all of them have passports and are branded by their owners.
- All the ponies - as well as the cattle, donkeys, sheep and pigs - you see in the New Forest belong to people who live locally and care for them.
- They are free to go anywhere they like, choosing the tastiest grasses and herbs to keep themselves healthy.
- A number of rare and precious species of plants and animals thrive here specifically because of the way the area is grazed by the commoners' animals.
- Their grazing keeps the grass short so that thousands of people can enjoy the New Forest every day.
- There is a 'browse line' - about head height - created by the ponies and cattle, that makes many paths in the New Forest far more accessible for everyone.
- Each year the ponies are rounded up in over 30 'drifts' so that they can have a health check, and their owners can take foals home to wean and handle.
- Many owners take this opportunity to put reflective collars on their ponies, but many lose them before they are caught on the drift in the following year.
- Many of the ponies are only handled once a year when they are caught by riders on the drift, and some are not caught even then!
- The ponies that live on the Forest are 'semi-feral' and do not generally like to be handled.
- 'New Foresters' as a breed make excellent family riding ponies with their gentle temperament and willing nature. Ponies bred on the Forest qualify for special Forest Bred classes at local shows.
- The sale yard at Beaulieu Road is the commoners' special market place for ponies born and bred on the New Forest. Ponies bought at the sales have gone on to win top national competitions.



THE
**Shared
Forest**
OPEN YOUR EYES

The Shared Forest Project is working to increase public awareness and understanding of depastured animals and commoning in the New Forest
Email: shared.forest@btinternet.com

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