



Find out more about  
commoners' animals  
in Lyndhurst 

### Contact us

New Forest National Park Authority  
Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road  
Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 9ZG

Main telephone number: 01590 646600

Fax: 01590 646666

E-mail: [education@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:education@newforestnpa.gov.uk)

Website: [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk)

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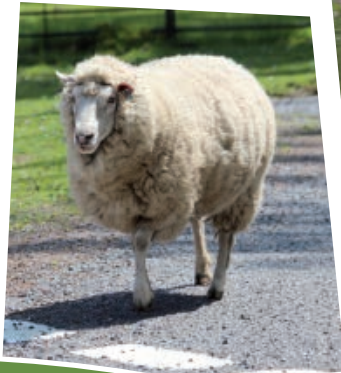
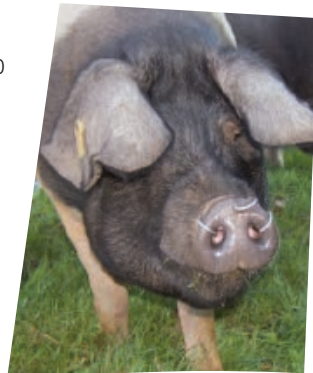
Front page pony and foal, and back page Highland cattle © Martin O'Neill

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ALL ABOUT

# New Forest Ponies and other Commoners' Animals



An activity book  
for all the family



# The famous five

The New Forest National Park covers over 200 square miles. About one-third of this is known as Open Forest – the woodland, heath, boggy areas and grassland where the commoners' animals graze. You will find five kinds of animals: ponies, cattle, donkeys, sheep and pigs.

The New Forest Pony is especially famous but all five are really important. Local people take care of them, tourists come to see them and they stop the Forest becoming overgrown by eating so much food!

Did you know there are over 7,500 of us animals on the Forest? You could keep a tally of how many you see like this:

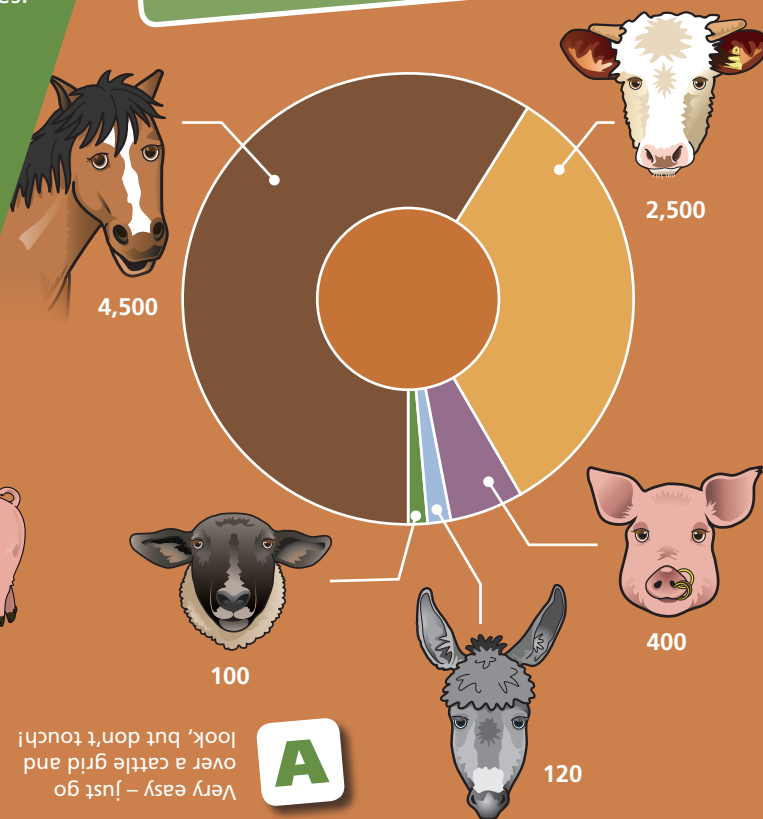
||||

Very easy – just go over a cattle grid and look, but don't touch!

A

Q How easy is it to see the New Forest ponies?

About how many are there?



# Animals have right of way

The ponies, cattle and other animals can go almost wherever they want across the New Forest National Park's open landscape. They are kept in by cattle grids, fences and the sea. They have the right to wander down the road, visit campsites and even stand in the middle of the High Street!

Unfortunately, the animals have not learnt that cars and other vehicles are dangerous. Ponies often step into the road just as a car is passing, so drive slowly and give them space. If another car is coming towards you as well, be ready to stop!

Many accidents happen at night. Some ponies have special reflective collars that shine in the dark, but look out for ponies without collars too.



Q How many 'I go slow for ponies' car stickers can you spot?



Remember: even at 30mph an accident can kill an animal and cause a lot of damage to your car.

Imagine I'm a two-year-old child standing beside the road. Drive past very carefully!

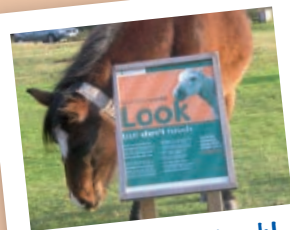


# Are they wild?

The ponies, donkeys, cows, pigs and sheep wandering free in the New Forest National Park are not wild like the deer. They are all owned by people known as commoners: about 700 of them. Each commoner owns or rents land which gives them the right to let their animals graze the Forest.



Beaulieu Road Sale Yard



Look but don't touch!

Many of the animals fend for themselves all year round. They are not used to people (you could say they are 'wild by nature') so it's best to 'look but don't touch'.

In spring and autumn, commoners sell ponies at the Beaulieu Road Sale Yard. New Forest ponies are well known for being easy to train and they become excellent riding ponies.

Some ponies live for over 30 years.



How long do you think a pony lives for: 20, 30 or 40 years?

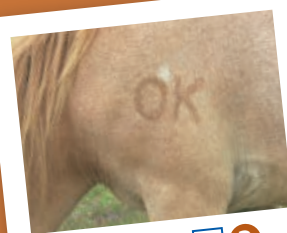
Colour in the names of the **wild animals** in red and the ones owned by people in blue.

pony cow dog  
donkey deer  
mouse sheep  
badger fox



# Branded for life

You can tell who owns each of the ponies by looking at the brand on their hip, shoulder or saddle. Cattle have ear tags with their owner's brand on them.



Branded pony ☐ 3



Branding iron

Each commoner has a different brand, often inherited from their family, made up of letters and/or numbers. Foals that are to remain on the Forest are branded in the autumn.

Design your brand

## Fun Forest Fact

If a branded pony is sold to another commoner, it ends up with the brands of both owners.

Each pony also has a passport but it's not so it can go on holiday! The passport has the pony's colours and markings sketched onto an outline. It also says who the pony's parents and previous owners were.

Colour in this pony ready for its passport. You could design your own brand using your initials or favourite thing about the New Forest.





# Verderers & Agisters

The New Forest has its own special ancient court in Lyndhurst where people known as Verderers decide how best to take care of the New Forest, both for the animals and the commoners. The Verderers employ five people (called Agisters) to help the commoners look after their animals.

Between August and November, the Agisters organise about 40 pony round-ups (drifts). On horseback and on foot they chase the ponies into fenced corrals in different parts the Forest. It's the only time that most of the animals are caught each year.

## Agister's tasks

- ✓ Check the animals are OK
- ✓ Collect marking fees from the commoners
- ✓ Help sick or injured animals

### At the drifts:

- ✓ worm the ponies
- ✓ cut their tails
- ✓ fit collars
- ✓ any to be taken off the forest for winter?
- ✓ brand any foals that are to stay on the Forest

**Q**

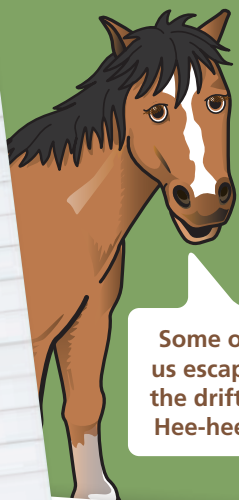
Is it OK to watch a drift?



Agister worming a foal

**A**

It's best to avoid the drifts – up to 30 riders and 150 galloping ponies make them dangerous places!



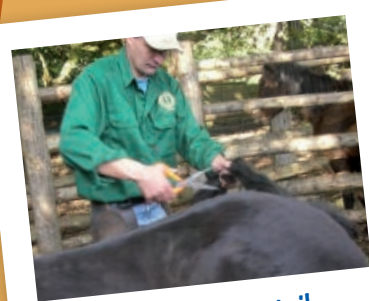
Some of us escape the drifts. Hee-hee!

# Tell-tail signs

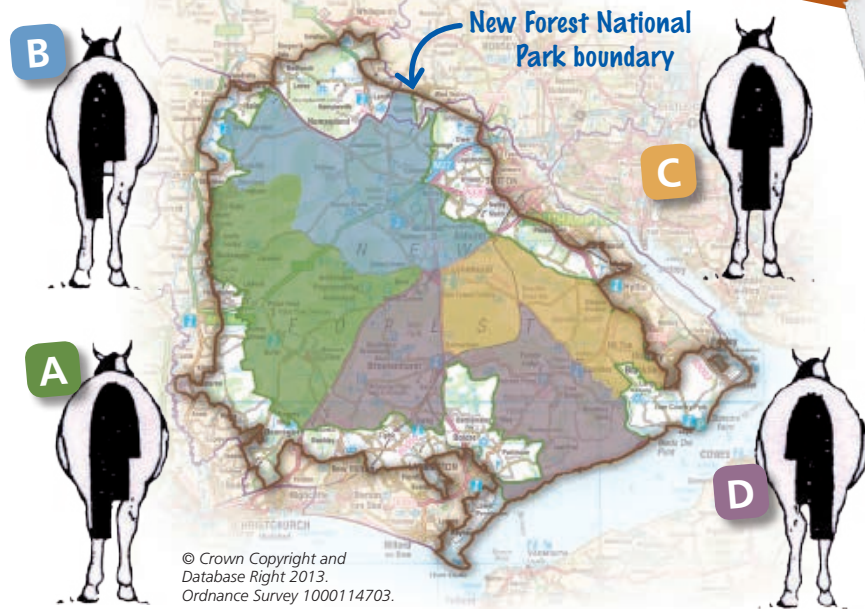
When you go to different parts of the Forest, see if you can spot the different tail patterns – they are most obvious in autumn and early winter just after they have been cut.

Agisters can recognise all the animals in their area and remember all their owners!

Agisters cut the tails of ponies and cattle to show marking fees have been paid by the commoners. There are four different tail cuts.



Agister cutting tail



## Fun Forest Fact

Most of the land grazed by the animals is Crown Land, managed on behalf of the country by the Forestry Commission. A pony with one cut from the left side lives on one of the 'adjacent commons' that are owned by other organisations such as the National Trust.



If my tail has been cut straight across, I was caught but not on one of the organised drifts.





# An ancient tradition

Even before William the Conqueror chose the *Nova Foresta* as his own royal deer-hunting ground in 1079, people earned a living from the land.

As recently 60 years ago, many people living in the New Forest would have kept a house-cow, a pig and a few ponies. This gave them food, some money if they sold one – and the ponies helped them get from one place to another.

Many older commoners can remember when herds of cows (with bells round their necks) were kept for milk, but these days the cattle are bred mainly for beef.



Ready to go to the Show



Cows used to be kept for milking

**Q**

How do you learn to be a commoner?

In the past, rights of common were enjoyed by people across most of Britain. In the New Forest, people who own or rent particular land still have some of these rights.

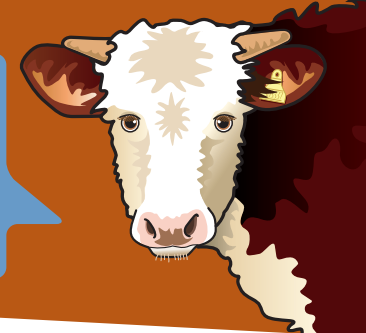


There are many commoning skills and tricks which most commoners learn from other commoners, especially their parents and grandparents.

**A**

# The rights of common

Draw a line between each right of common picture and its description. Then test your friends. How many rights can they get right?!



The right to collect wood for fuel, also known as 'estovers'. Today, Forestry Commission staff cut and stack wood for about 100 properties with this right.



Common of pasture



Common of marl

The right to dig peat turves from the ground for fuel. This was a valuable right until cheaper fuels, like coal, became available. It is no longer practised.

The right to graze ponies, cattle and donkeys



Common of mast



Common of fuelwood

The right to take lime-rich marl (clay) from Forest pits as a fertiliser and for building houses and barns. This right is no longer practised.

The right to turn out pigs in the autumn, during the 'pannage season'



Common of sheep



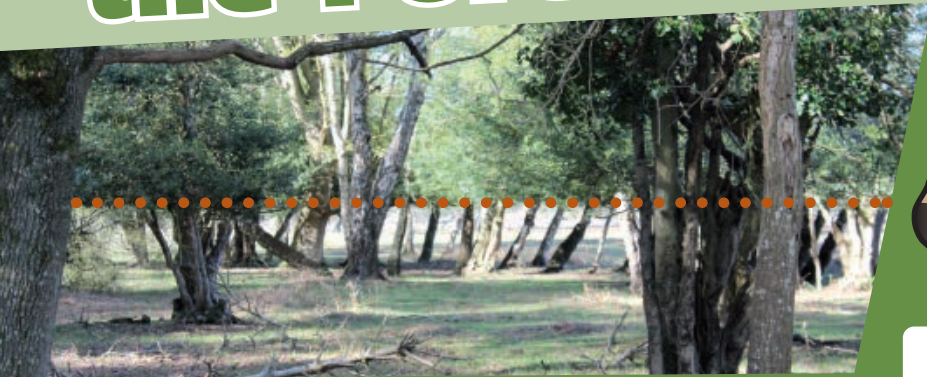
Common of turbarry

The right to graze sheep. Very few people have or use this right.

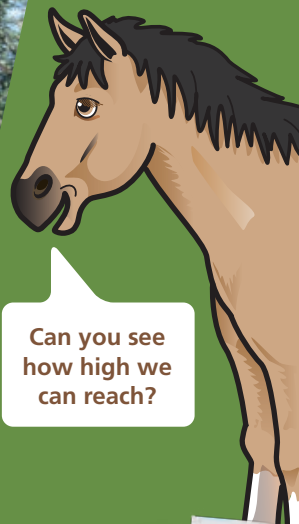




# Architects of the Forest



The Open Forest looks like it does because of the teeth, hooves, trotters and snouts of the commoners' animals. Their eating and trampling keeps the habitats in good condition. Although they don't do it on purpose, it's as though they are designing the Forest like an architect designing a house or shopping centre!



Can you see how high we can reach?



Holly leaves ☐ 2

## Fun Forest Fact

The most prickly holly leaves are low down where ponies and cattle can reach them. Out of reach the leaves can be quite smooth.

People also take care of (manage) the Forest. This includes Forestry Commission staff who are responsible for the Crown Lands of the National Park.

Can you see any signs of these activities?



Heather baling ☐ 9



Heathland burning ☐ 6



Holly pollarding ☐ 7



Swiping ☐ 5

# Back-up land

In and around the National Park, look for fields being used as back-up land. You might see ponies or cows being fed, hedges being trimmed, silage or hay being cut and baled, and fences being repaired.

It's becoming very hard for young commoners to find and afford back-up land – making it more and more difficult for them to continue commoning.

My owner has to have some fenced-off back-up land in case I need to be taken off the Open Forest.



Q

For which of these is back-up land used?

- 1 sheep that want a holiday ☐
- 2 animals that need extra food ☐
- 3 ponies on their way to the sales ☐
- 4 making hay and silage in summer ☐
- 5 donkeys that are bored of living on the Forest ☐
- 6 feeding cattle in the winter ☐
- 7 cows having their calves ☐
- 8 ponies ready to have their foals ☐
- 9 animals injured in road accidents ☐
- 10 poorly animals ☐



All except 1, 5 and 8 are correct.

A



# I spy a pony



**Q**

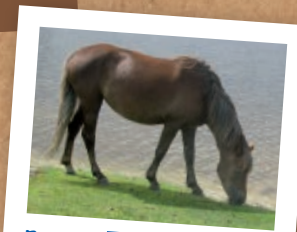
Can you spot the Shetland pony in these pictures?



Dun ☐ 2



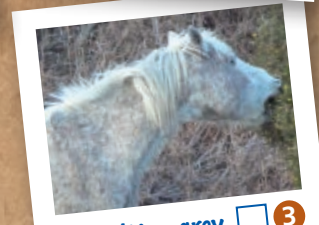
Bay ☐ 1



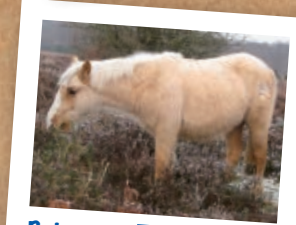
Brown ☐ 2



Black ☐ 2



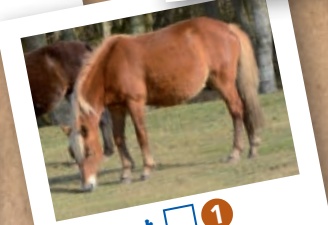
Flea bitten grey ☐ 3



Palomino ☐ 5



Grey ☐ 1



Chestnut ☐ 1  
(with flaxen tail and mane)



Piebald ☐ 4



Skewbald ☐ 4

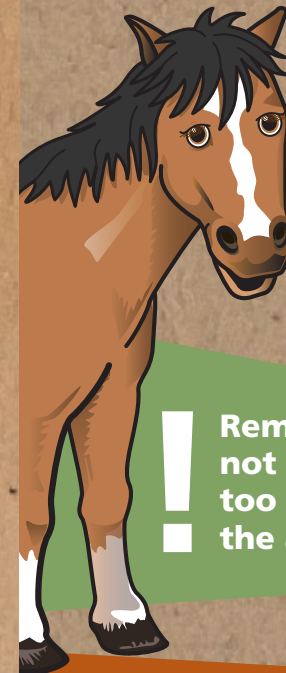
The piebald is a Shetland pony

**A**

## Fun Forest Fact

Many foals change colour completely in their early years. Some black foals finish up being grey!

# Every one is different



Our face markings have different names – how many can you spot? Sometimes you get a mixture!

Remember not to get too close to the animals.



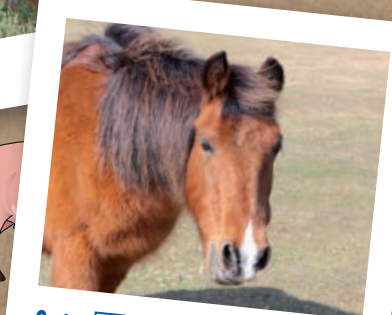
Stripe ☐ 1



Blaze ☐ 2



Star ☐ 1



Snip ☐ 3

There are no rules about the type of pony you can turn out on the Forest. Look carefully and you might see a Shetland or Dartmoor pony. In 1852 Queen Victoria turned out an Arab stallion (a male horse) called Zorah.

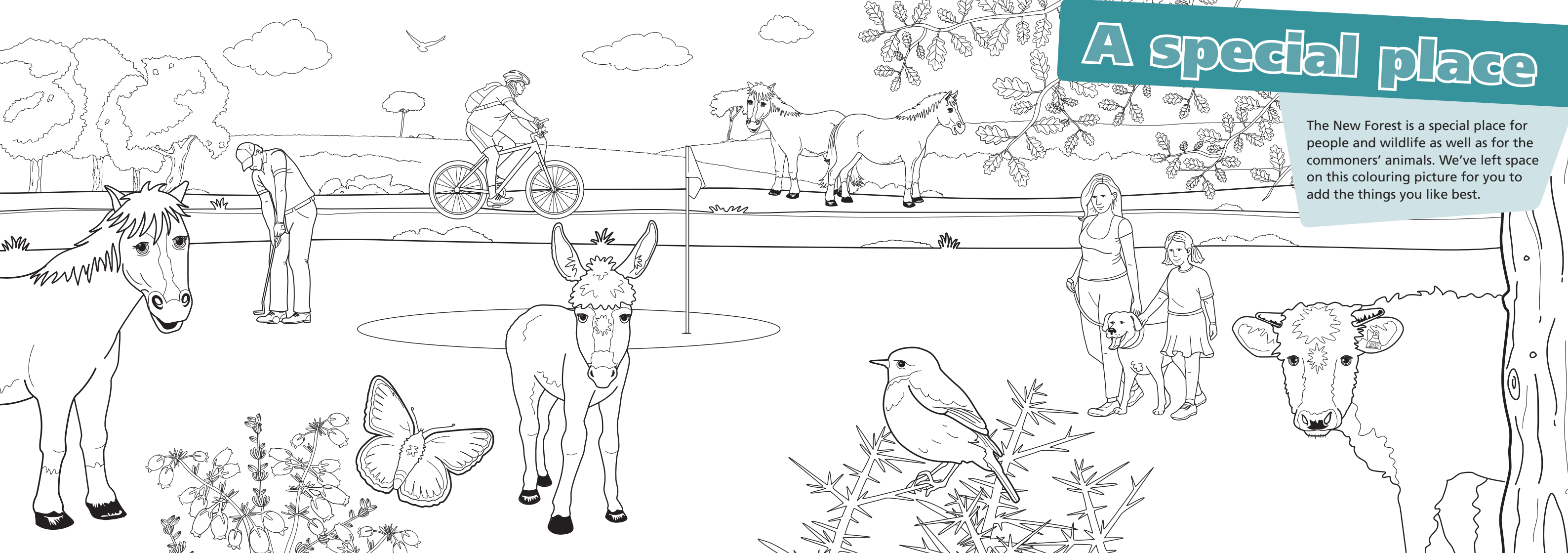
## Fun Forest Fact

To stop too many foals being born, very few stallions are allowed amongst the mares – in some years as few as ten stallions for just four weeks.



# A special place

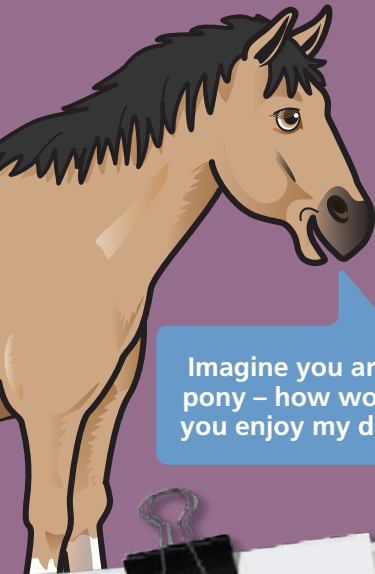
The New Forest is a special place for people and wildlife as well as for the commoners' animals. We've left space on this colouring picture for you to add the things you like best.





# What's for lunch?

## Pony Menu



Imagine you are a pony – how would you enjoy my diet?

This menu will provide you with a New Forest Pony balanced diet.

**Not sure how to eat it?**  
Copy your mum!



### Gorse

A very nutritious but spiny winter food that gives you a shiny coat



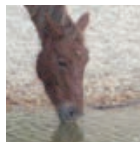
### Holly

Another prickly meal for those cold windy days



### Ash leaves

A super snack in autumn when they fall off the trees



### Fresh water

Enjoy this cool, unpolluted still water from the nearest stream or pond



### Grass

Scrumptious – and plentiful except in winter and early spring



### Heather

Not every pony's favourite



### Bark

If you can't find anything else to eat!

## Fun Forest Fact

Purple moor grass often grows on recently burnt ground, providing a late winter treat for the animals.

# No human food thanks!

Each pony tends to stay in one area, which we call a haunt. Here it finds all the natural food it needs, choosing from different trees and plants depending on the time of year.

Giving ponies or donkeys human food is not good for them. Garden clippings and grass cuttings from lawn mowers can give them a really bad tummy ache called colic.

Feeding the ponies and donkeys by hand encourages them to develop bad habits. They pester people for food and some even kick or bite if they don't get it!

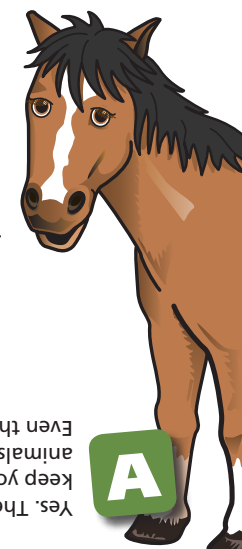
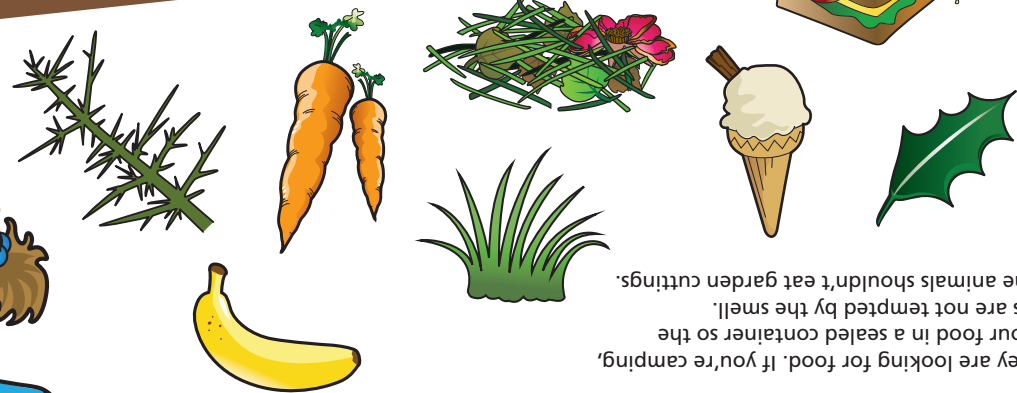
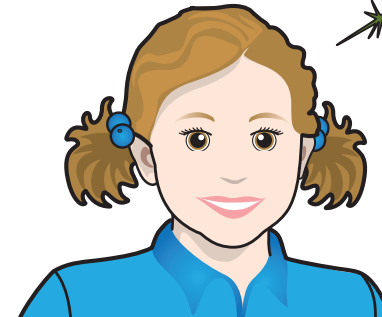


Q

Is it true that some ponies and donkeys damage tents?

Please DON'T feed us

Draw lines to show who should eat what  
(one of them shouldn't be eaten by either)



Yes. They are looking for food. If you're camping, keep your food in a sealed container so the animals are not tempted by the smell. Even the animals shouldn't eat garden clippings.

A

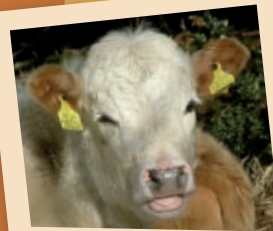


# Mooove along now

If you spend much time in the New Forest, sooner or later you'll come across a herd of cattle walking very slowly down the road. Commoners often take them off the Forest:

- when they are about to have a calf
- in autumn to avoid the poisonous acorns
- in winter when the grazing is not so good.

Commoners cross-breed their cattle to produce hardy, fast-growing animals. Over the years the breeds of cattle on the Forest have changed from dairy to beef.



All cattle have to be ear-tagged so that we can identify each individual animal. Their meat can then be traced and we can be sure our food is safe to eat.



**Is it possible to buy meat from New Forest cattle and pigs?**



**Bulls are too dangerous to be allowed to roam on the Forest. If you see a cow with a young calf, do keep well away as she will try to protect her calf, especially if you have a dog.**



Yes. Look for the New Forest Marque symbol which shows it is locally produced food.



# Beefy breeds

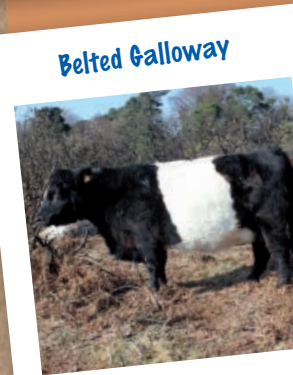
## Traditional British breeds of cattle



Hereford ☐ 2



Shetland ☐ 5



Belted Galloway

Black ☐ 3



Red ☐ 4



Dun ☐ 5



Highland ☐ 4

See how many of our breeds you can find in and around the New Forest.



Aberdeen Angus ☐ 4

## Continental breeds, usually used as bulls



Charolais ☐ 5



Simmental ☐ 4



Limousin ☐ 4



# Pass the apple sauce please

In the autumn, or pannage season, pigs are let out to eat the fallen acorns, beech nuts (known as mast), berries and other tasty morsels. The acorns are poisonous to ponies and cattle but not to the pigs.

Pannage usually lasts 60 days but if there are lots of acorns the pigs are allowed to stay out for longer. By December the pigs are ready to be made into delicious sausages, pork chops and bacon: ideal for a New Forest breakfast!



Acorns



Beech nuts



Sows (female pigs) that are pregnant can be left out after pannage until their piglets are born. We call them privilege sows. You may also see pigs at other times of year in the north of the Forest where there are different rules.

No. Every year some ponies and cattle die from eating too many acorns. Also, many don't get eaten and eventually grow into oak trees.



Blackberries



Do the pigs eat all the acorns?

## Fun Forest Fact

Pigs have rings in their noses to stop them rooting up the ground too much and damaging it. It hurts them if they try to dig too hard.



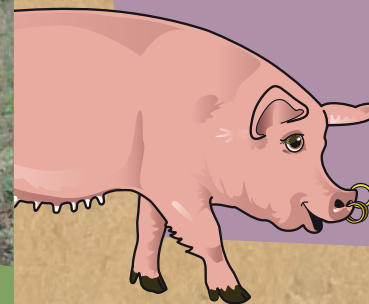
# Spot the pig



Commoners tend to cross-breed their pigs to produce hardy pigs that find their own food and become a good size for pork and bacon.

Boars are not allowed on the Forest!

When you see lots of pigs in a field, they usually look like these large whites. They have lots of piglets which fatten quickly.



If you come across one of my friends, see if you can work out which breed it is.



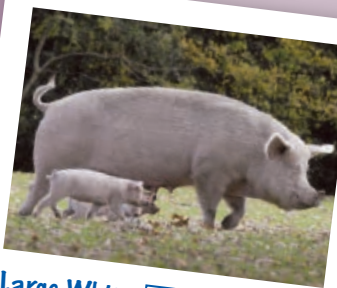
Saddleback 3



Gloucester Old Spot 3



Tamworth 8



Large White 3

## Fun Forest Fact

Some commoners shout 'chug chug' to call their pigs - and they come running!

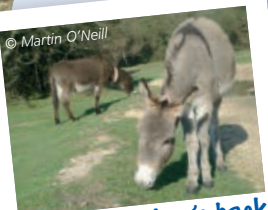


# Fuzz lions and sheep

There are usually just over 100 donkeys in the New Forest. Most tend to stay around the villages, even standing in shop doorways or at the bus stop!

Look for the dark cross on their backs. Legend says that this is because a donkey carried Jesus to Jerusalem and the shadow of the cross fell on the donkey's back.

Donkey foals are sold at the Beaulieu Road Sales, usually as pets but also to pull a cart or for children to ride.



Cross on donkey's back

☐ 3



Teddies made from New Forest wool

## Fun Forest Fact

Donkeys are sometimes called fuzz lions - maybe the noise they make at night sounds like a lion?



Sheep ☐ 5

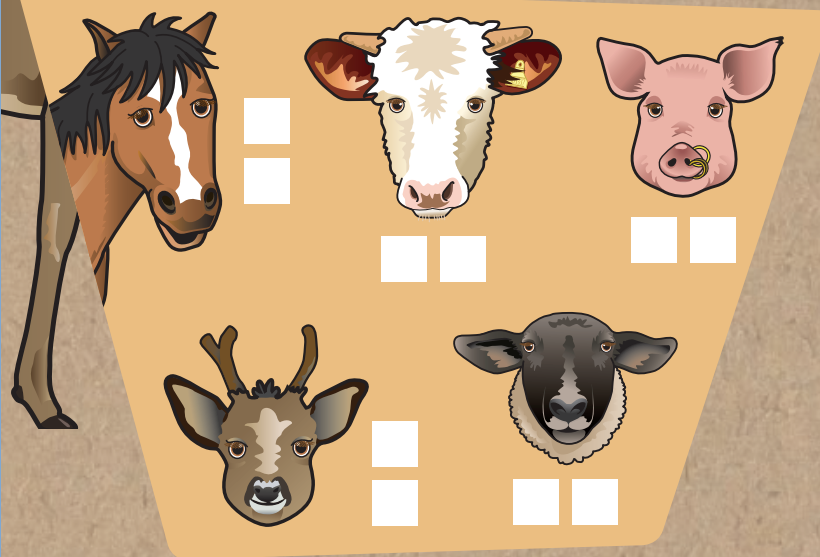
In and around the New Forest most of the sheep are kept in fields with fences. Some of the large farm estates have the right to graze sheep on the Open Forest, but very few do so. Try looking on the National Trust commons around Bramshaw, in the north of the National Park.

Sheep wool is popular with New Forest spinners, and New Forest lamb makes a good Sunday roast.

# Who's done that?!

See if you can match the animal to its footprints and poo.

By the way, I'm **NOT** a commoners' animal but I do live in the New Forest.



A



B



C



D



E



☐ 3

1



☐ 8

2



☐ 9

3



☐ 3

4



☐ 6

5

Pony = D 1, Cow = B 4, Pig = A 3, Deer = E 2, Sheep = C 5

A



# Commoners' events

## New Forest Show

This three-day event in July attracts thousands of people to New Park near Brockenhurst each year. Wednesday is New Forest pony day when commoners bring their ponies to be judged.

## New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society Show

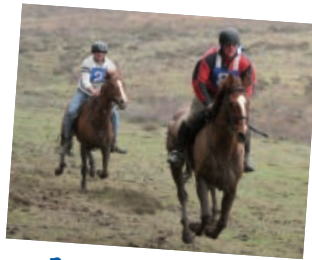
Another three-day show at New Park at the end of August. On Saturday the stallions are judged. On Sunday New Forest ponies compete in dressage (a bit like pony-dancing), jumping, driving (carts not cars!) and showing. On Monday all of the ponies are shown 'in hand' (without anyone riding them).

## Boxing Day point-to-point

In this special New Forest race, riders are told where the exact start and finish will be only on the day of the race so they can't practise the route in advance. There are different races for children and older people, and for different kinds of ponies and horses. Crowds of people turn up to cheer as they approach the finishing line.

## Forest Fed Competition

In late winter ponies are judged on the Open Forest. Prizes are awarded for the best ponies in each Agister's area.



Pony racing on the point-to-point



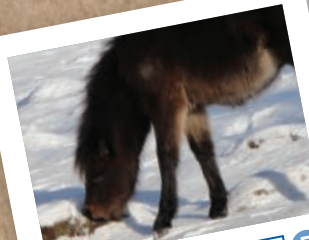
Our owners have lots of fun!

# It's tough being a pony

New Forest ponies are left out all year round if they are fit enough. They have ways of coping, even in spring, the most difficult season.

## Test your friends.

Can they work out how the ponies survive?



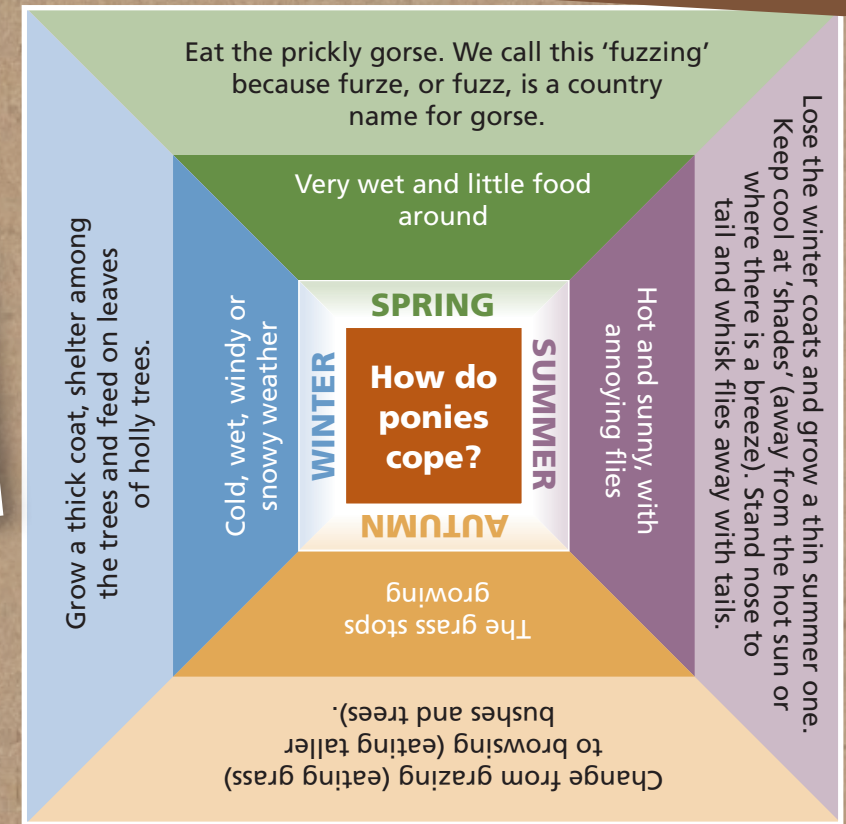
Grow a thick coat ☐ 5



Find some shade ☐ 3



Eating gorse ☐ 5

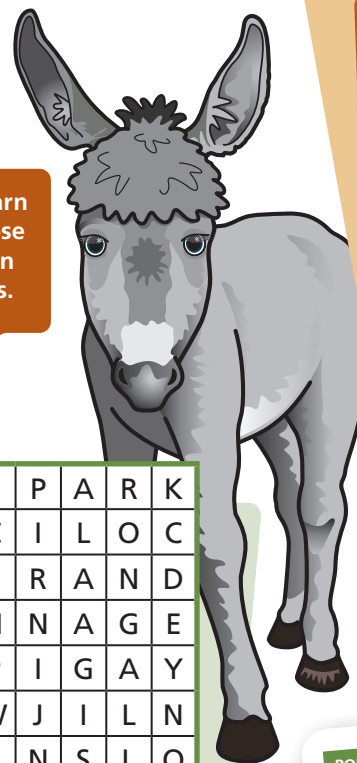




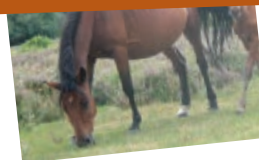
# Special names and words

	Ponies	Donkeys	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep
Male	Stallion	Jack	Bull	Boar	Ram
Female	Mare	Jenny	Cow	Sow	Ewe
Baby boy	Colt foal	Jack foal	Bull calf	Shote	Ram lamb
Baby girl	Filly foal	Jenny foal	Heifer calf	Shute	Ewe lamb
1 year old	Yearling	Yearling	Stirk	Gilt (female)	Yearling

See if you can learn the names of these animals and then test your friends.



## More things to do!



Bay ☐ 1

Tick the boxes when you see these things. The score for each is shown like this 3. You get more points for those that are harder to find!

## Where's the pig!

There are 20 of these pigs hidden in this book. Can you find them all?



## Tell us what you think

The people who wrote this book hope you enjoy learning about the animals that live in the New Forest. They would be delighted to know which bits of the book you liked best and how it could have been even better. Send a postcard, letter or e-mail to the addresses on the back page.

Can you find these New Forest words?

PONY	BREED	DRIFT
COW	BAY	VERDERER
PIG	DUN	COMMONER
SHEEP	HAUNT	NATIONAL PARK
DONKEY	COLIC	CROWN LAND
DEER	ACORN	PANNAGE
FOAL	GORSE	GALLOWAY
CALF	AGISTER	SADDLEBACK
CATTLE	BRAND	
SOW	COLLAR	

Words are hidden up, down, across, diagonally and backwards!



**IT'S THE LAW:**  
Report all accidents involving a pony, cow, donkey, pig, sheep, dog or deer

**POLICE (24hrs) – 999 (emergency)  
101 (non-emergency)**

Road traffic accident involving a pony, cow, donkey, pig, sheep, dog or deer

**VERDERERS' OFFICE  
023 8028 2052 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)**

Sick, injured or distressed pony, cow, donkey, pig or sheep

**FORESTRY COMMISSION  
023 8028 3141 (24hrs)**

Sick, injured or distressed pony, cow, donkey, pig, sheep or deer

### REMEMBER:

- Even if it runs off, the animal may have serious injuries.
- Forest animals have no road sense and have right of way!
- Drive slowly, especially at night, and give animals a wide berth.
- If you feed animals, they may stay by the road and be killed.

**New Forest Animal  
Emergency Hotlines**



## I go slow for ponies



NEW FOREST  
NATIONAL PARK

Always drive carefully in the New Forest. Place this sticker where it will not obscure your view.

Emergency hotline cards and window stickers are free from many information points and visitor attractions in the New Forest. Or send a stamped addressed envelope to the address on the back page.

