

Name _____



How Horses Communicate

Horses have many fascinating ways to communicate with each other and with humans. They use a combination of sounds, body language, and even scents to share information and express their feelings.

One of the most common ways horses communicate is through sound. They neigh or whinny when calling out to other horses or seeking attention. A low nicker is often used by a mother horse when she talks gently to her foal or when a horse greets a friend. Horses also snort when they are curious or alert.

Body language is another important way horses express themselves. When a horse pins its ears back, it often means the horse is angry or upset. If a horse's ears are forward, it usually means they are curious or paying attention. Horses also use their tails to communicate. A relaxed tail shows calmness, while a swishing tail might mean the horse is annoyed.

Horses can communicate visually too. For example, they will lower their heads and stretch out their necks when feeling relaxed. When a horse feels threatened, it might raise its head high and flare its nostrils.

Interestingly, horses also use scents to send messages. They have a special organ called the Jacobson's organ, which helps them detect scents. When a horse curls back its lips and makes a funny face called the "flehmen response," it is actually sniffing for information in the air.

These different methods help horses live in groups called herds where they work together to stay safe. Understanding how horses communicate can help people care for and train them better.