

Name _____



The Role of Horses in the Ecosystem

Horses play an important role in the ecosystem. As herbivores, they help maintain healthy grasslands by grazing on plants. This grazing prevents overgrowth and helps new plants grow, keeping the environment balanced and healthy.

Horses also contribute to seed dispersal. As they eat plants, seeds often get caught in their fur or pass through their digestive system. When horses move to different areas, these seeds are spread across the land, helping plants grow in new places.

Another way horses help the environment is by fertilizing the soil. Their waste, or manure, adds nutrients back into the ground. This helps plants grow stronger and provides food for insects and other small animals, which are important parts of the food chain.

Horses can also shape the landscape. As they travel, their hooves press into the soil, creating paths and breaking up hard ground. This can make it easier for water to soak into the soil, which helps plants grow better and supports other animals.

In the food chain, horses are prey for predators like wolves and mountain lions. This means they help support predator populations by being a food source. However, horses' speed and strength make them difficult prey for many animals.

By helping plants grow, fertilizing the soil, and supporting predators, horses play a key role in keeping ecosystems healthy and balanced.