

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Do Horses Form Relationships with Other Species?



Horses are social animals that can form relationships with other species. These relationships can range from mutualism, where both animals benefit, to parasitism, where one benefits while the other is harmed.

One example of mutualism involves horses and birds like the cattle egret. The egret often sits on the horse's back and eats insects that bother the horse, helping keep the horse comfortable while the bird gets a meal. Another mutual relationship can occur with humans. Horses provide transportation and help on farms, while humans offer food, shelter, and care. Horses can also experience commensalism, a relationship where one animal benefits while the other is unaffected. For example, small birds or insects may follow a horse to eat bugs stirred up as the horse walks, but the horse is neither helped nor harmed.

However, horses can also experience parasitism. Some parasites, like ticks and lice, attach to horses and feed on their blood, which can cause discomfort and health problems for the horse.

Horses form strong bonds with other horses and sometimes with other animals like dogs, goats, and donkeys. These bonds can help reduce stress and provide companionship. For example, therapy horses often form close connections with humans, offering emotional support in return for care and kindness.

In conclusion, horses engage in various types of relationships with other species. Some of these relationships are helpful, while others can be harmful. These interactions show how animals can be connected in nature.