



15/9/1918.

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# **NOTES ON HORSE MANAGEMENT IN THE FIELD.**

**(ISSUED BY THE Q.M.G.'S BRANCH.)**

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# NOTES ON HORSE MANAGEMENT IN THE FIELD.

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## GENERAL.

### Introduction.

These notes are based on the official publication, "Animal Management," prepared by the Veterinary Department of the War Office, which it is recommended should be studied.

### Resourcefulness Necessary when Difficulties Arise.

The adoption of councils of perfection is often impossible on Service. Resourcefulness must be exercised to meet difficulties.

Common sense and ingenuity will help to overcome troubles, and forethought to prevent their development.

### Need for Careful Supervision by Officers and Men.

The Officer Commanding a unit is primarily responsible for the condition of the horses in his charge.

Constant supervision by Officers and N.C.Os. is essential, particularly as many of the men in direct charge of animals have had no pre-war experience of the work.

### **Objects Aimed at by Horse-mastership.**

Horse-mastership aims at keeping the largest number of animals as fit as possible, and reducing inefficiency to a minimum, by prevention of accidents and illness.

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## **WATERING.**

### **Quality and Quantity.**

Every effort should be made to ensure a clean supply of water in sufficient quantity.

8 to 10 gallons per day per animal is required.

### **Need for Troughs.**

Water from troughs if possible, and if regular troughs are not forthcoming some substitute should be found. Anything capable of holding water will do, *e.g.*, biscuit and tea tins, ground sheets and tarpaulins of all kinds, variously supported.

### **Animals not to be Led into Water.**

Unless absolutely necessary, animals should not be taken into the water to drink, particularly into ponds and muddy bottomed sluggish streams.

### **Danger of Dirty Water.**

Drinking dirty water if persisted in, will upset digestion and lead to sand colic, and general inefficiency. It is also a common source of intestinal worms.

### **Troughs—How Filled.**

Pumps should be used, if available. Take care not to stir up mud and sand while pumping.

Lower the inlet pipe quietly into the water in a bucket, and keep it there while pumping.

Filling troughs by buckets is laborious and slow, but is justified if no better means are at hand.

#### **Water Should be as near Camp as Possible.**

Time and energy spent in going to and from water is pure waste. The nearer the camp to its water supply the better.

#### **Watering in Camp.**

In standing camps water at least three times daily, and in summer four times.

#### **Watering on the March.**

While on the move allow a good drink whenever possible, however hot and sweaty the animals may be, unless very severe or fast work is expected.

#### **Not Immediately after Food.**

A heavy drink soon after a meal is liable to upset digestion and should not be allowed.

The usual routine is water first, feed after. At liberty horses drink as they feel inclined.

#### **Rules for Watering at Troughs.**

1. No man should take more than two animals at one time to drink.

2. An Officer should be on duty at the watering place while the animals are drinking. When not available, a warrant officer or senior N.C.O. should be detailed.

3. Animals should be watered in batches, a whole batch should be kept at the trough till all have finished and have had their heads up for at least one minute. Every batch will require from five to six minutes actually at the trough.

4. Bits should always be removed and girths slackened.

5. Water troughs should be frequently emptied and cleaned.

6. Kickers should be watered separately.

#### **System of Decentralization Advisable.**

Drinking water offers a ready means of spreading disease. It is better to provide separate troughs for each unit than to allow one trough to be used by a number of units.

Where several units have to water at one place, arrange a time table to prevent overcrowding and kicking.

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## **FEEDING.**

### **Little and Often.**

The principle of "little and often" should be followed.

### **Allotment of Forage Ration.**

Feed at least three and preferably four times a day. A late feed, say between 8 and 9 p.m., even of hay is beneficial.

### **Bulk Essential and the Need for Chaff.**

Bulk is essential, particularly for draught animals, and whenever possible, add chaff, made from hay, straw, or freshly cut grass, to each feed.

In the absence of chaff cutters one man can soon produce a useful amount of chaff, with a heavy knife or chopper, using any log of wood as a chopping block. Rough grass from banks or hedge rows, or young rushes are useful for the purpose.

#### Scale of Ration.

This is laid down in General Routine Orders, Q.M.G.'s Branch, and unless the issue is restricted by the military situation the full amount should be drawn.

Under war conditions it is frequently necessary to make use of whatever is obtainable, and the following may with advantage be given:—

- (a) As a substitute for hay.—Oat, wheat, barley or pea straw, in the form of chaff if possible.
- (b) As a substitute for oats.—Maize, small quantities of barley, linseed cake, linseed, peas and beans.
- (c) As a laxative diet and to make bulk.—Bran, turnips, beetroot, mangolds, carrots, green crops, brewers and distillers grains.

#### Wastage: Nosebags, Hay Nets.

Waste of food must be prevented at all costs.

Feeding off the ground should not be allowed. Both hay and oats at all times may become soiled, and in wet weather trodden into the ground. In windy weather hay is blown about and wasted.

Every animal should have a nosebag and hay net.

Nosebags, after use, should be turned inside out, cleaned and dried in the sun if possible. They should never be left lying about on the ground.

#### **Save Hay Seed, Short Hay and Clover Leaves.**

Hay bales should be broken up and hay nets filled at a central place.

Economy will be effected if the hay is rubbed over an improvised sieve. Seeds, clover leaves, and short hay will fall through and only the clean long hay should be put into the nets. The material which falls through the sieve, and would ordinarily be wasted should be given as chaff.

The sieve can be made with hay or chicken wire, secured to a rough wooden frame 5 or 6 feet long by 2 or 2½ feet wide supported horizontally 2½ feet from the ground.

#### **Do not Feed Mouldy Forage.**

Mouldy hay or corn does more harm than good, and should not be given.

Bran mashes are useful, but bran is not absolutely necessary for horses at work. It is chiefly used for horses which are sick or those at rest.

For a bran mash take 2 to 3 lbs. of bran, a tablespoonful of salt, and as much *boiling* water as will well wet the bran. Cover and allow to stand till cool enough to eat.

#### **Salt.**

Salt, particularly rock salt, may be given with advantage.



### **Epsom Salts and Other Drugs.**

Epsom Salts and other drugs are unnecessary, and may be harmful. Horses no more require regular dosing than do men.

### **On the March.**

When on the march the nosebag should be put on whenever possible.

No animal should be sent on any duty or fatigue without a filled nosebag and hay net.

### **Effects of Wrong Procedure.**

The over-hungry horse is so impatient that he tosses food about and wastes it, and will bolt his food without chewing it properly. Wind sucking, dung-eating, and other objectionable habits are largely due to leaving animals too long without food or to giving an insufficiency of bulk.

### **Grazing and Green Food.**

Encourage grazing; it is beneficial to health and helps out the scale of forage.

Green clover, sainfoin, etc., when in season, may be accepted in lieu of hay to a limited extent (not exceeding 10lb. per day).

## **GROOMING.**

### **Cleanliness the First Object.**

Time spent in grooming is well spent.

The primary object is cleaning the skin, but the general health is much improved thereby.

Do not suppose that animals on active service, and in the open, require no grooming.

Grooming must be systematic. It should always be possible for every animal to be groomed once daily.

Give special attention to manes, tails and heads. They are often neglected and prove starting grounds of skin diseases. Tails should not be cut.

Do not wash legs. When wet, dry them to prevent cracked heels.

Wash sheaths occasionally.

Place a rug or blanket on a sweating horse if he cannot be dried quickly.

#### **Curry Combs.**

Curry combs are useful for removing caked dirt from the coat. Improvise from hoop-iron and other material in the field, if not issued specially.

#### **Examination of Feet.**

Pick out feet and carefully examine for picked-up-nails and other foreign bodies.

#### **Detection of Skin Disease, etc.**

Officers and N.C.Os. during stables should instruct men, and at the same time keep a close watch on the animals.

The men should be trained to notice, while grooming, anything irregular either in the behaviour of the animal or in the appearance of the skin, and to report signs of itchiness, lice, nits, ringworm spots, patches where hair has come out, and any other irregularities.

On service, skin diseases are likely to break out. Early detection is most essential. Failure to detect the trouble until it has spread extensively in the unit indicates inexcusable negligence.

### **Sand Baths.**

Sand baths have many advantages, and unless mange or other skin diseases exist, they should be encouraged. It is good for an animal to roll, and mules particularly appreciate it.

## **PICKET LINES.**

### **Best Method.**

Picketing may be either on breast-high air-rope, secured between wagon wheels, trees or posts, or on a ground rope secured by means of picketing pegs. The former is the better method.

### **Rope to be Secure and Taut.**

The rope in both cases should be strong, well secured and kept taut.

### **Single Peg Objectionable.**

Single picketing pegs are objectionable, unless the head ropes are kept short, and heel ropes are also used. They are necessary for picketing-kickers and for single horses generally.

### **Need for Short Head Ropes.**

Never allow the head rope to be too long. Heel galls are usually caused by getting the hind leg caught in a too long head rope.

### **Prevention of Heel Galls.**

For animals on a ground line, the head rope should be just long enough to allow the head to be held in a natural position over the line. On a breast line the head rope should be of sufficient length to admit of the animal getting its head to the ground.

### **Advantages of Heel Ropes.**

Heel ropes, whatever may be said against them, reduce the chance of serious injuries from kicking.

The head and heel ropes should be just taut when the animal is standing in a natural position square to the line.

### **Position of Picketing Lines.**

Place picketing lines at right angles to, rather than parallel with, contours. This ensures a more or less level standing for each horse whatever the slope may be.

### **Drainage of Lines.**

Attend to the drainage of lines, particularly in relation to storm water, by improving existing drains, or making new ones, as may be necessary. Do not wait for bad weather.

Forethought in this will prove beneficial.

### **Stable Guards.**

Post stable guards for duty between stable hours and at night, with instructions for the care of animals placed under their charge. Their duties should be to check quarrelling and kicking, adjust rugs, tie up loose horses, keep lines clean, take off nosebags, etc.

### **Standings.**

Where camps have to be occupied for a lengthened period, standings should be made. They should be firm and wear-resisting. Part worn sleepers, wooden planks, broken brick and masonry, chalk and cinders, fascines or any solid materials should be used. It is harmful to keep animals standing for any length of time in urine soaked mud.

Remove dung from horse lines daily, and if possible out of camp. Flies breed in fresh horse dung.

#### **Overhead Cover.**

Overhead cover has advantages, and when available should be made use of, or should be improvised during winter. Wind screens are of great value for animals in the open.

Whether cover is provided or not, firm standings and good approach roads to standings and water troughs are necessary.

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## **HEALTH, CONDITION, EXERCISE, Etc.**

#### **Appearance of Health.**

The following are indications of health:—

Head alert, eyes bright, ears pricked, appetite good, body well furnished, skin supple and bright, standing even or resting one hind leg, droppings fairly firm and not slimy, urine light yellow and rather thick in appearance.

#### **Condition.**

Condition is not merely a question of looking well. It means ability to do some special work satisfactorily with a minimum of strain.

It must not be confounded with fatness. It can only be secured by a gradual process of preparation, and attention to detail.

Each class of animal should be, as far as possible, brought on gradually at its own work, particularly draught horses and remounts recently received.

When work is insufficient, exercise for from 2½ to 3 hours a day. Heavy draught horses at a walk and others part walk and part trot.

An Officer should attend exercise parties, and an N.C.O. should be detailed to front and rear of each party to regulate pace and prevent straggling.

Care should be taken to bring animals back to their lines cool.

An animal in soft condition sweats easily and very soon becomes tired and distressed. If work under these circumstances be forced, complete exhaustion and even death will follow.

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## SHOEING.

### Supervision of Shoeing.

The Officer commanding a unit should carefully watch his animals feet. Much inefficiency arises from faulty shoeing and preventable foot injuries and ailments.

Daily inspections should be made by a farrier or shoeing smith.

The rate of wear of shoes varies, but they should be replaced as worn out.

No animal should be allowed to go over one month without attention to feet and re-shoeing, the feet being lowered, and either a new set of shoes put on or the old shoes re-applied (termed a "remove").

### Mules Feet often Neglected.

It is very common to find the feet of mules much neglected and allowed to grow too long.

**Cold Shoeing.**

Though "cold shoeing" is the recognised method on active service, all opportunities for shoeing hot should be taken advantage of.

**Picked-up Nail.**

Animals working on ground long in occupation of troops are liable to very serious injury from "picked-up nail." Travelling kitchens and camp fires where box wood is burnt cause free scattering of nails. Every supply or refilling dump or building being constructed adds to the danger.

Control in this respect is urgently called for.

All should be encouraged to pick up nails and put them in specially provided receptacles.

**HARNESSES AND SADDLERY.****Fitting.**

Much inefficiency can be prevented by attention to fitting of harness and saddlery.

Very common faults are:—

- (a) Breast collar too low;
- (b) Breeching too loose and too long;
- (c) Loin strap too short.

Periodical inspections should be adopted, and the sick state watched carefully.

If galls are reported or observed, their cause should be discovered and removed.

Harness should be kept clean, soft and pliable.

### **Saddle Fitting.**

The backs of riding horses should be inspected after every march, and causes of rubs or galls should be marked down for remedy. All galls have their particular cause, which must be traced.

In determining the cause of injuries, the man who has ridden the animal should saddle up, as there may be some peculiarity in his procedure to account for the trouble.

Instruction in folding the saddle blanket is necessary, as the intelligent employment of this article of equipment will permit of safely working animals which have begun to lose flesh.

### **Clothing.**

At least one rug per animal is necessary in the open during winter. If rugs cannot be carried, the saddle blanket must be depended upon.

A rug during rain, even if wet through, is an advantage.

It is advisable that rugs should be numbered, to ensure the same one being constantly used for the same animal.

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## **CLIPPING.**

Unless the troop horse can be clipped before the end of November, there is a risk of his feeling the effect of loss of the protection afforded by the coat during the winter season.

If left unclipped, there is danger of widespread mange and certainty of extensive lousiness.



To obtain the best results, it is advisable to clip the whole body before the end of November, and subsequently to clip trace high only.

The legs should not be touched under any circumstances.

When mange or bad lice infection has taken place, clipping is necessary as part of the treatment.

The only practical way of dealing with clipping is by means of power clippers. Instructions for the care of these can be obtained from Ordnance Service.

