

All donkeys and ponies, as well as cattle, sheep and pigs, that you see in the forest are owned. They belong to people who live locally and care for them. Their owners are *New Forest Commoners* who practice the ancient right to graze their livestock on the open forest.



Keep your distance and stay safe

- Never feed or pet forest animals
- If a pony approaches you, move away. If you are sitting down, stand up and move away.
- Avoid coming between a mother and her young.
- If you are camping, keep your food locked away. Even food left in tents is tempting so always store it in a secure airtight box.
- Picnics: be aware that food, rustling bags and even car doors opening may attract the attention of a pony. Please take all your litter home or place it in one of the pony-proof litter bins.
- Pony-free picnic areas: Fenced picnic areas are provided at Blackwater, Bolderwood and Wilverley.

Contact:

Forestry Commission England, The Queen's House, Lyndhurst, Hampshire, SO43 7NH.

For more information please visit [forestry.gov.uk/newforest](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest) or call the Forestry Commission on: 0300 067 4600 (24hr) or the Verderers Office on: 023 8028 2052 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm) or visit [verderers.org.uk](https://www.verderers.org.uk) or visit [realnewforest.org](https://www.realnewforest.org)

We will consider all requests to make publications available in alternative formats.

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Get to know

New Forest Ponies



Thank you
for **not petting**
or **feeding**
the ponies

[forestry.gov.uk](https://www.forestry.gov.uk)

Feeding and petting forest animals only encourages them to behave badly – pestering people and hanging around busy roads and car parks.



The animals are a familiar and much-loved part of the landscape. They roam free, going anywhere they like, choosing the tastiest grasses and herbs to keep themselves healthy. Many rare and precious plants and creatures thrive here in the New Forest specifically because of the way the area is grazed by the commoners' animals.

The ponies and cattle are the architects of the Forest, their grazing keeps the grass short and they have created a 'browse line' at about head height. The animals really don't need to be fed by visitors to the forest.

Human food, even discarded fruit and vegetables, can make them ill and could even kill ponies and donkeys. Some ponies will spend time at locations which are popular with visitors, because they are attracted to people with food. Sadly, every year a few people are hurt by ponies or donkeys that have learned to expect food. Children are especially vulnerable so please act responsibly and keep a safe distance.

Most New Forest ponies and donkeys are even-tempered animals and often come close to visitors, but they are not used to being handled and are happier left alone. They can react very suddenly if they feel threatened, so give them space.

Although they look cute and you may want to take photos, please keep your distance, especially when there are foals and calves on the forest.

"Mum always tells me to keep a safe distance from the ponies"

Milly, age 7, New Forest Commoner

Pony facts

- **New Forest ponies are born and bred on the Forest** and have developed as a breed that is perfectly adapted to its local surroundings. Groups of ponies tend to remain in the same area, known as their haunt.
- **The New Forest Verderers** employ five Agisters, who are responsible for supervising the day-to-day welfare of the stock. They work closely with the owners to monitor the condition of the animals.
- **Every year, the ponies are rounded up in 'drifts'** so that they can have a health check, and their owners can take foals to their small holding to wean and handle them if they intend to sell them as potential riding ponies.

Enjoy your experience of the New Forest and when admiring the ponies don't get too close and please don't feed them.



Look out for warning signs

The most common sign that a pony is stressed by you is when they put their ears back. If you see the ears held back towards their neck like in this photo, move away and the pony will calm down.