



Mare and Foal
Sanctuary

Enrichment for Stabled Horses



Enrichment Programme for horses and ponies that need to be stabled

It is vital that we try to provide our horses with as much enrichment as possible, particularly when they need to be on box rest or stabled for long periods of time. Enrichment activities stimulate the horse's natural behavioural instincts and prevent the development of stress related behaviours.

There are several types of enrichment that we can offer to appeal to the horses' natural behavioural instincts.



Social enrichment ensures that the horse gets more natural interaction with other horses. This could be achieved by keeping another horse with them in the crew barn for company, for example. The horse could then still partake in activities such as mutual grooming, social feeding and social drinking, all of which

are key natural behaviours.

There is also **nutritional enrichment** where we can use food as a form of enrichment. There are many ways of doing this from treat balls to providing grass trugs and bunches of hedgerow plants.

Grazing is a large part of an equine's life, they are trickle feeders, designed to eat little and often throughout a 24-hour period and they

eat for 16 to 18 hours per day, so being able to simulate this as much as possible by choosing a wide variety of different types of food and forage is hugely beneficial to them.

Horses, given the opportunity would walk many miles in a day, keeping them in as large a space as possible and spreading their food so that they are encouraged to look for it or walk between different areas goes a little way to simulating this behaviour.

It is **important to vary the types of enrichment** as much as possible and change the activities daily to ensure that it does not become boring for the horse and to maximise the mental stimulation. It is equally important to bear in mind that any new activities have the potential to cause stress or frustration for the horse, so it is essential that any new activities are supervised and removed immediately if signs of stress are seen. Most activities can be made easier to start with and then gradually made more difficult to avoid any major frustration.

As a sanctuary, we need to ensure that we do our best to make time spent in the stable or a period of box rest, which can be extremely stressful for a horse, as enjoyable as possible.



Methods of Enrichment

1 Treat Balls

These are factory made stable toys and are a good stimulating activity for horses on box rest. The ball is filled with treats and the horse has to push it around to cause the food to fall out of the holes. Once you are happy that the horse knows what they are doing and doesn't get frustrated, these do not need to be supervised.



2 Treat Branches

There are many different types of tree branch that you can use. Apple or oak (no acorns) for example. The branches can also have things like apple sauce or jam smeared on them, fruit and veg skewered onto the twigs or polos hooked over to make it more interesting. These branches can be hung around the stable or placed on the floor so that they can also "browse" at different heights.



Safe Trees:

Apple, Oak (no acorns), Birch, Hazel, Beech, Field Maple, Willow

3 Flavoured Hay

Get a small bucket of water and soak a herbal or fruit teabag until the water is infused then soak some hay in the water for 30mins. You can try lots of different flavours to make the forage more interesting! This hay is not intended to replace the horses' normal hay but as a tasty added extra!



Methods of Enrichment



4 Egg Box

Empty egg boxes can be used to put treats in so that the horse must figure out how to get them out. Start with the box open and as the horse gets more skilled you can progress to having it closed so that they also must figure out how to get the box open first! Herbs and spices can also be used to add different smells and flavours.



Methods of Enrichment

5 Food Scatter

Involves getting a scoop of tasty treats such as fibre nuggets or fruit and veg chunks and scattering them around the stable. The horse then has to walk around to gather them which stimulates the grazing and walking instincts and gives them some mental stimulation in trying to find them all.

6 Hedgerow Plants

There are many hedgerow plants that are safe and tasty for horses. These can be collected and placed in the stable at varying heights and on the floor to stimulate foraging behaviour. Always ensure that you know what you're collecting and that it is safe for horses to eat!

7 Herbs and Spices

Herbs and spices are a great way of stimulating the horse's sense of smell and giving them something to think about at the same time as allowing them a selection of new things to taste. You can put little piles of different herbs around the stable so the horse can explore them and decide which they like best or they can be used in egg boxes or hidden in different activities.



Methods of Enrichment

8 Hay Ball

The hay ball can be stuffed with different types of forage or hedgerow plants and other tasty treats and hung from the ceiling in the stable or put on the ground. It allows the horse to practise grazing, browsing and walking behaviours.



9 Treat Mat

A mat that has a textured surface so that treats can be spread around on it and the horse has to concentrate on getting the food out, or things like apple sauce could be spread over it.



10 Apple Bobbing

This is placing apple slices in a bucket of water so that the horse has to fish them out. When starting this for the first time, make sure that there is only a small amount of water in the bucket so that it is easy for the apples to be caught, this ensures that the horse doesn't get too frustrated! As time goes on and they get better at it, the difficulty can be increased by adding more water.



Methods of Enrichment

11 Fruit and Vegetable Kebabs

This involves threading different types of fruit and veg on to a string or rope so that the horse has to bite them off. These can be hung anywhere in the stable.



12 Toy Box

Allowing the horse to explore and play with a few different (and safe) objects. Examples may include; traffic cones, milk cartons, footballs. Anything that is not going to cause any injury!



Methods of Enrichment

13 Scratch Mats

We can use either a mat with a textured surface or an old broom head to attach to the wall in the stable so the horse can use it to scratch the itches that they cannot reach themselves!

14 Flavoured Licks

There are many different types of shop bought licks that can be used for enrichment purposes as well as salt licks. You can also make ice licks by freezing some flavoured water or chunks of fruit and veg and making a horse ice lolly. This is particularly beneficial in the summer months! A mat that has a textured surface so that treats can be spread around on it and the horse has to concentrate on getting the food out, or things like apple sauce could be spread over it.



15 Clicker Training

Clicker training can be used in many ways to stimulate the horses' brain and thought processes. It is also a good way of bonding with the horse and training them for any situations they may find difficult or feel anxious about such as needle phobia, worming or loading.



Enrichment Programme

At the Mare and Foal Sanctuary, we have a responsibility to ensure that all our horses are as happy and well cared for as possible. Regular enrichment is of benefit to any horse but particularly important during times of box rest when we know that stress is going to be increased and natural behaviours are restricted.

Whenever a horse needs to be on box rest for any reason, an enrichment programme will need to be formulated for the duration of the box rest, making sure to vary activities and introduce new ones slowly. This will ensure consistent mental stimulation and minimisation of stress. We need to make sure that as many of the horse's needs are met whilst still adhering to medical requirements.

Each day, a member of staff will be assigned the task of ensuring that any enrichment needs are met and to make up programmes if necessary.

The methods listed here are only some ideas of what we can do but there are many more too!

Enrichment Plan Example

	Morning	Lunch	Afternoon	N/C
Monday	Flavoured Hay	Treat Branch	Food Scatter	Treat ball and grass
Tuesday	Herbs and spices	Hay ball	Treat mat	Treat ball and grass
Wednesday	Toy box	Fruit and veg strings	Flavoured hay	Treat ball and grass
Thursday	Apple bobbing	Clicker training	Food scatter	Treat ball and grass
Friday	Flavoured lick or ice lick	Herbs and spices	Hay ball	Treat ball and grass
Saturday	Food scatter	Toy box	Apple bobbing	Treat ball and grass
Sunday	Treat mat	Flavoured hay	Clicker training	Treat ball and grass





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