



FAST FACTS

Name: Horse

Common name: Wild horse or Mustang

Scientific name: *Equus caballus*

Fact: While caballus' ancestor was native to North America, the modern-day horse was introduced to this part of the world in the 1500s.

PHYSIOLOGY

Unlike domestic horses, wild horses have stronger legs. They have hard hooves so they may tolerate many different types of ground conditions. Because wild horses spend their time roaming the terrain, they can look dirty and mangy.

Wild horses come in a variety of colours, such as grey, black and white. However, about half of all wild horses are roan – a reddish-brown – in colour. They grow to an average size of 317 kilograms, although adult stallions can weigh up to 450 kilograms.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

They eat mostly grass, but will feed on leaves, twigs and even tree bark when there is no grass to be found.

When a horse is born, it is called a foal. When it turns two years old, a male is called a colt and a female is called a filly. A colt becomes a stallion about six years later, and fillies become mares.

Wild horses generally stay together in groups, or herds, for protection. A herd is made up of one adult male with a harem of mares and their young. Once another colt comes of age, he must either challenge the dominant stallion or leave the herd. It is the job of the stallion to protect the herd from predators. The stallion stays at the back of the herd to warn the others if an enemy should approach.

RANGE

The majority of wild horses in Canada are found in the west, but as natural habitat decreases, governments and organizations are creating preserves to try and maintain wild horse populations.