

What Can Exmoor Ponies Do?

Those that live on the moor are generally kept to breed strong, healthy ponies to ensure the future of the breed. Those foals not kept for breeding and many of those bred off the moor are used for riding, driving, jumping, dressage, trekking and riding or driving for the disabled. Because they are so strong, they can carry adults up to 12 stone in weight or children and they have great stamina. They are also used on nature reserves because they eat plants that would otherwise spread and destroy wildlife habitat.

Why do they all look alike?

All Exmoor ponies are brown, bay or dun, with a 'mealy' nose (as if they have dipped their nose in a bucket of wholemeal flour) and pale markings around their eyes. This is because Exmoor ponies born today are very similar to those born thousands of years ago. They have not been mixed with other types of horses and ponies, so no other colours, markings or shapes are possible. And anyway, look carefully - do they really look the same?

What sort of food do they like to eat?

They like anything and everything! They have special teeth which help them eat tough heather and gorse as well as grass out on the moors. When they live in fields, their owners have to make sure they don't get too fat as this may make them ill.

How many ponies are there?

There are probably about 3000 Exmoor ponies in the world. However, only about 500 are ever bred from which is why the Rare Breeds Survival Trust describes them as "endangered". About 400 ponies of breeding age live out on the moorlands of Exmoor plus about 100 youngstock (figures as at 2013)

Are the ponies on the moor wild?

Strictly speaking, no. They are wild in the sense that they live free in natural herds, most with a stallion, mares and foals, and they find their own food, water and shelter. However, they are all owned by someone and checked regularly. Also their owners decide which stallions will run with the herds. So they are usually described as free-living rather than wild.

Do they live on the moor all year round?

Yes. They stay out all through the year and are only gathered onto their home farms for a few days each autumn so that the new foals can be inspected.

Do they all have their own names?

Yes. When foals are registered with the Exmoor Pony Society they are given their registration numbers and their owners name them. All this information is held in the Exmoor Pony Stud Book.

How can I find out more?

You can see the ponies in action and talk to their owners at the Stallion Parade on the first Wednesday in May and at the Breed Show on the second Wednesday in August (both on Exmoor) and at Society Area Shows around the country.



Released in November 2005, the story of the Exmoor's free life and living with people.

There is also a selection of books and films available from the Exmoor Pony Society. Details of these and lots more information on Exmoor ponies may be found on the Society's website at:

www.exmoorponysociety.org.uk

or contact the Secretary at:

Exmoor Pony Society
Woodmans, Brithem Bottom,
Cullompton, Devon, EX15 1NB
01884 839930

All You Ever Wanted To Know



About Exmoor Ponies

What are the main features of an Exmoor pony?

Exmoor ponies have hardly changed since prehistoric times when they lived alongside mammoths and sabre-toothed tigers. If you look carefully you can still see the features that have helped them to survive for thousands of years, plus the signs of their ownership.

Short ears – that keep out the cold, wind and rain.
Toad eye – a raised, fleshy rim around each eye sticks out to help make the rain run away from the eye and off the face.

Thick, long mane to shed water from the pony and for warmth.

In winter the coat has a short, soft, warm under-layer covered with a waterproof top coat of greasy hair. So little heat is lost through this that when snow settles on the pony's back it doesn't melt and make them catch cold.

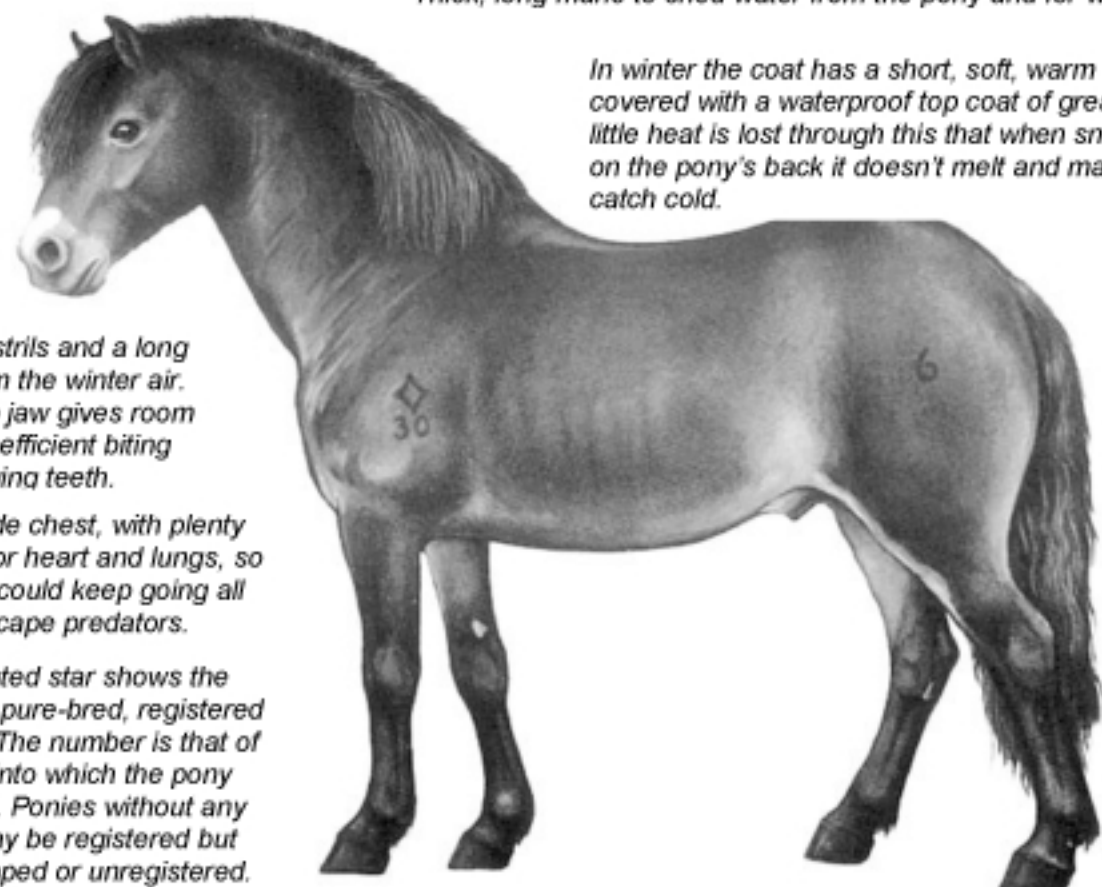
The pony's own, unique number.

Thick, long tail with short hairs at the top forming a water chute so that rain runs off quickly.

Large nostrils and a long face warm the winter air. The deep jaw gives room for large, efficient biting and chewing teeth.

Deep, wide chest, with plenty of room for heart and lungs, so the pony could keep going all day to escape predators.

Four-pointed star shows the pony is a pure-bred, registered Exmoor. The number is that of the herd into which the pony was born. Ponies without any marks may be registered but microchipped or unregistered.



Strong, nimble legs that make the pony agile, sure-footed and fast to escape predators.

Very hard feet that cope with rough ground.

All their natural characteristics are adapted either to surviving hostile weather, being able to live on poor food or escaping becoming another animal's dinner!