

## PONIES

**The first ponies can be tracked back to the beginning of the 1700's and were mainly used for pulling carts in coal mines in Northern Europe and England.**

In the last 350 years, they have endured selective inbreeding and genetic alterations to possess certain characteristics and size. Now there are a wide variety of different pony breeds such as the Shetland, Exmoor, Dartmoor and the Welsh Cob.

Today they are commonly kept for pets but are also bred for horse shows, riding schools, fairs, carnivals or petting zoos.

Sadly, genetic alterations and inappropriate mating selection has predisposed them to many health implications. One of the most common health implications in Ponies is issues with their teeth and this can lead to very serious and life-threatening illnesses. Ponies have problems with their teeth because their heads have been genetically modified to be much smaller resulting in overcrowding, overbites, underbites, sinus infections and prevents food from being grinded up which can eventually result in colic which can be fatal if unnoticed or untreated. Many ponies also suffer from this illness because of their susceptibility to weight gain due to unsuitable pasture or incorrect diets.

Ponies are also particularly susceptible to many other illnesses including Hyperkinaemia, Cushing's disease, Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS) and Laminitis. Dwarfism is also a complication caused from inbreeding and results in faults to their limbs, spine and jaw and can cause chronic pain or the inability to stand or move. An example of this is shoulder dysplasia in miniature Shetlands, commonly referred to as 'Shetland Shoulder'.

Thousands of ponies each year require veterinary treatment or are euthanised due to their health implications and many will suffer, untreated because of the large costs involved.

With the rising cost of food, stabling and veterinary care it is estimated they can cost up to £100 per week to look after and national Equine charities such as The British Horse Society



Rescued Miniature Shetland and Dean Farm Trust

and Redwings have seen a huge rise in the number of horses abandoned at shelters each year. These animals often arrive in extremely poor conditions due to lack of care and will often have behaviour problems making them very difficult to rehome and puts the charities under immense pressure.

Unwanted ponies can be bought for as little as £5 at a market and many people are just giving them away. They often fall into the hands of irresponsible owners or if a suitable home cannot be found they are sold and slaughtered for meat. The number of horses that have been sold to the meat industry has almost doubled since 2008.

Dean Farm Trust promotes compassionate living

