

# #RealNewForest

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## Why isn't the New Forest pony the only breed on the Forest?



Commoners have the right to turn out any unshod equine to graze the New Forest.

It does not need to be a pure-bred New Forest Pony. Each commoner is responsible for their own animals, and is free to decide what is best for them and for their animal's welfare. Some breeds will be less hardy than a New Forest pony, and some more hardy. Whatever the breed they will have to be taken home if and when they need additional care. Donkeys too have a very long history in the New Forest. You will see donkeys, shetlands and coloured ponies grazing the New Forest during the year, and being sold at the Beaulieu Road sale-yard. Every equine mouth helps maintain the habitats of the New Forest through their grazing, and each breed grazes a little differently. It all helps.

Each commoner will have their own plans for their Forest-run ponies, some will stay to graze the Forest, some will become their own riding, driving or showing ponies, and some will be sold to new owners. This is a genuine case of "horses for courses". A little variation in the animals that graze the Forest is simply a reflection of the diversity within commoning.

Of course, the New Forest pony is the best adapted to grazing the extraordinary mosaic of habitats, ranging from coastal marshes and bogs, to dry heaths, hedgerows and woodlands. Breeding has been carefully managed to ensure that the qualities of the New Forest pony are maintained, particularly through the selection and control of stallions. Stallion numbers on the New Forest are adjusted each year according to market conditions for the sales. The New Forest Pony is now included on the list of native rare breeds. Since the 1980s the commoners have instigated successive schemes to encourage the keeping of high quality registered New Forest mares.

Most foals bred on the New Forest are registered with the [Breed Society](#), whether as pure-bred or cross-bred. **Around 9 in 10 of the foals registered each year by the Breed Society are pure-bred New Forest ponies\***. Of course, any Shetlands and Exmoors etc., are registered with their respective societies instead of ours. All foals must be registered and "Forest-bred" remains a very desirable attribute, and is controlled by the Society. The first volume of the New Forest Pony Stud Book was published in 1910.

There are several pieces of folklore around the development of today's New Forest pony breed. In her wonderful book "New Forest Ponies" Dionis Macnair says:

"Every native breed has the myth of the stallion that swam ashore from the Armada – certainly not possible in the New Forest; there were no wrecks in the South Coast. As we know there was a Royal Stud in the Forest it seems very probable Spanish stallions stood here and were crossed with the local ponies to breed these more athletic mounts. This would be the first chance to try them in action. We also have stories of veteran army horses turned out on the Forest"

For more on the story of the New Forest Pony take a look at the [Breed Society website](#)

\*In 2018 there were 15 selected stallions turned out for up to 37 days; this was the highest number and length of time for some years. As a result, In 2019 the Breed Society registered 413 foals, of which 373 (90%) were pure-bred New Forest ponies.

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