

# Theme: Horses

## Gross Motor (Indoor & Outdoor):

- If you don't have any stick horses, children can "ride" large cardboard tubes left over from gift wrap, old mailing tubes, cardboard cutouts, etc. Let the children "gallop" around the yard (or designated indoor area if the weather is bad). They can use their imaginations—rounding up the herd as cowboys, showing their horses at the fair, driving the stage coach, working as mounted police, practicing their safety signs....
- Stack a few bales of hay (you can get small ones at the craft stores in the fall) and let the children climb on them.

## Math Activities:

- Likenesses and differences – show 3 copies of the same horse that are just alike, and 1 that is alike except for 1 thing (a different colored tail, for example); young children tell you which one is different and why
- Count horses on the flannel board
- Which bale of hay is large? Medium? Small? (or carrot, saddle, etc.)
- How many legs, tails, eyes, ears, etc., does a horse have? Do all horses have the same number?

## Science Activities:

- Compare grass to hay—what's the difference? How did it change?
- Compare horse hoof prints to those of cows, pigs, etc. Display some paper and crayons so children can trace the hoof prints.
- Compare colors of different horses.
- Display some scraps of leather and some tools so children can mark the leather; many saddles and cowboy boots have decorative leather. The children can see how this is done.

## Small Motor/Manipulatives:

Put hay in your sand and water table, along with some plastic horses, and Lincoln logs to build a stable.

On another day, you could put the same items in the sand table and put sand in it, or small wood shavings (cedar shavings you would use in a hamster cage, for example) or sawdust.

Let children lace saddle shapes cut from brown construction paper or cardstock.

Make a large cardboard cutout of a horse's head and securely attach yarn to the top to represent a mane. Let the children braid it.

## Snacks:

- ❖ Animal crackers
- ❖ Cookies shaped like horses
- ❖ Use a horse-shaped cookie cutter to cut out sandwiches, toast, cheese slices, etc.
- ❖ Carrots
- ❖ Haystacks (unbaked cookies made from pretzels, etc.)

**Special Visual Aids/Room Set-Up/Field Trips:** Visit a stable! Have the owner tell the children about his horse(s), what horses eat, how often they need to be exercised, etc. Look at the tools used to groom a horse. Watch the owner brush his horse. Look at the saddle. How should you behave in a barn or stall when you're around horses?

**Songs & Fingerplays:** My Dad used to do this one with us. With the child sitting on your lap facing you, bounce the child while holding her hands (or waist, if the child is very young), "Ride a little horsey, ride him to town; ride a little horsey, but don't fall DOWN!" As you say the word "DOWN", let the child fall through your legs. Holding on to them, you can keep them from hitting the floor. Children LOVE this, so beware! You'll be doing it a lot!

Other resources: [http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool\\_themes/rodeo/rodeo\\_songs.htm](http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/preschool_themes/rodeo/rodeo_songs.htm)

## Books:

The Horse Breeds Poster Book, by B. Langrish

The Wild Little Horse, by R.Gray and A. Wolff

The Kingfisher Illustrated Horse & Pony Encyclopedia, by S. Ransford

Horses, by L.Driscoll

The Kids' Horse Book, by S. Funston

War Horse, by M. Morpurgo

The Horse in Harry's Room, by S. Hoff

The Girl Who Loved Horses, by P. Goble

Robert the Rose Horse, by J. Heilbronner

Horse Anatomy, by J.Green

Buffalo Bill and the Pony Express, by E. Coerr

Chang's Paper Pony, by E. Coerr

Whitefish Will Rides Again! By A. Yorinks & M. Drucker

Cowpokes, by C. Stutson

Grandpa Was a Cowboy, by S. Sullivan

Blue Horse, by H. Stephens

Harry's Pony, by B. A. Porte

Album of Horses, by M. Henry and W. Dennis

Blackie, The Horse Who Stood Still, by C. Cerf & P. Peterson

## Dramatic Play:

- Cowboy costumes, hats, boots
- Stick horses, etc.
- Lincoln logs
- Toy horses
- Mail bags and "mail" (an assortment of old envelopes from your junk mail would be great!) for those wanting to be pony express riders

## Art:

- Make sculptures out of sugar cubes and frosting "glue".
- Cut out horse shapes or trace them onto a large sheet of paper and let the children paint their horses.
- Make a collage out of hay.
- Do a stamping activity with miniature bales of hay (from craft store, or make your own).
- With small paper plates and a variety of laces, ribbons, bows, etc., let the children make hats for their horses (like the fancily-dressed horses that pull the buggies at the park)

## Circle Time Activities:

1. Look at photos of horses and talk about the different horse breeds. Let children put labels under photos representing several different breeds (obvious differences).
2. Talk about the usefulness of horses. How have horses been helpful to us throughout history? Pony express, police horses, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, cavalry horses, race horses, cowboys' horses, horse-drawn buggies, shows, etc.
3. Have "cowboy day"! Sit around an imaginary campfire and sing cowboy ballads from the old shows, such as Roy Rogers.
4. Talk about famous horses, such as Trigger, Hi-Ho-Silver, etc.
5. Have a veterinarian visit to tell about the care of horses.
6. Talk about proper hand signals if you are riding around cars; let the children practice them as they gallop around the room (or the yard) on stick horses (or cardboard cutouts, or cardboard gift wrap tubes, etc.).
7. What do you do when....? Let children let their imaginations run wild coming up with things they would do if the horse bucked, kicked, stopped, reared back, or takes off at a fast pace. Be sure to end this discussion with the proper way to address these horses' behaviors.
8. If the county fair is in town, go see the horse show.
9. Demonstrate the strength of horse hair. Show an old violin bow and let children feel of the horse hair.
10. Tell the story about the Trojan Horse and let children create their own out of a cardboard box!