



Equine Gentling Community Herd, CIC 12789929

Project and Land Management Overview

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How we help the land

1) Grassland Management Overview

Horses are becoming increasingly significant grazers in our countryside, organisations like the National Trust, Natural England and Sussex's very own Knepp. You don't have to have native ponies to make sure that horse keeping has a positive impact on the landscape, wildlife and the environment. Good pasture and land management practices alongside equine knowledge ensure that the risks to horse and land are minimised.

2) Our Herd

Our herd is made of 13 horses and ponies aged between 7 and 27. They are a mix of mares and geldings (castrated males), this mix is essential for the herd hierarchy and security. We have no stallions in our herd which minimises the risk of latrine development. Within the herd we have a mix of native and mix breed horses and ponies; 2 Dartmoor Hill Ponies, 1 Shetland Pony, 1 Welsh Mountain Pony, 1 Welsh Cob, 1 Traditional Cob, 1 Welsh Section D, 2 Cob Crosses, 1 Connemara Cross, 1 Friesian Cross, 1 Haflinger Cross and 1 Appaloosa Cross. Our horses have been grazing freely on various different types of land for over 3 years. They do not need stables, man made shelter and for the last year (when we have had 60 acres to graze) they have had no supplemental feed.

3) Stocking Density

The recommended stocking density for managed equine grazing is 1 hectare (2.14 acres) per horse. However, this figure is on the basis that the herd are stabled/moved into barns during adverse weather and health issues. At the 4 acres per horse that we operate at, there is flexibility should we need to move the herd off a section of land for protection and recovery. This also ensures that the horses move in a natural way, practically eliminating many horse injuries/illnesses common in stabled horses (such as obesity, Laminitis and associated metabolic disorders)

4) Considerations for the horses

Horses typically graze between 14-16 hours a day, spending their remaining time engaging in social activities and sleeping. Conservation grazing ensures their natural behaviors are encouraged. Horses are selective grazers, choosing some species over others at different times of the year thus a mixed species sward can encourage them to walk around their available land area, searching for the species they prefer and ensuring that exercise is taken while at pasture.

Land Management Overview

Many of the negative landscape impacts relating to the keeping of horses can be negated by operating a sustainable stocking density and operating a managed conservation plan. We have addressed these traditional grazing concerns below:

1) Soil and Land Type

With our stocking density land can be managed with single line electric fencing in a combination of open areas and a tracking system. This is used to protect and encourage more intensive grazing in selective areas such as to manage invasive species.

2) Grazing Horses'

Their natural inclination to seek out nutrition from growth other than grass means they keep the invasive gorse, thickets, bushes, brambles at bay allowing the fine chalk grassland wild flowers to flourish. This in turn aids ecological rewilding, boosting the population of butterflies, insects and bees. Our horses hawthorn berries and thistle buds and have even been known to strip off bark.

3) Water Supply

If there is no water supply, we are able to move water from other supplies at a sufficient rate.

4) Gates & Poaching

We will create a number of gateways and pathways (with electric fencing) to prevent the poaching of any one area. We don't feed our herd hay, meaning they don't congregate in any area such as hay bales, gates and fencing, which is the main cause of land poaching.

5) Manure

Horse manure that our maintained stocking density produces is at a level that the land can handle without clearing. If we graze on a rotation across smaller plots of land, we 'poo pick' and can create manure piles that can fertilise other parts of the land. Dung piles provide habitats for invertebrates and micro-fauna as well as producing microorganisms that improve soil structure and biological activity.

6) Horse Welfare

We care for our horses with a natural and holistic approach. This includes our holistic vet, Charlotte Heath and our zoo pharmacologist volunteer. She advises on the ingredients for the horse's herb ball treats which is done through self selection of oils and herb powders. Our horses don't wear horse shoes reducing damage to the land and increasing hoof health. They are visited regularly by our local farrier to ensure their feet are kept trimmed and healthy. Where possible we use natural remedies for common ailments. All of these actions reduce the amount of chemicals in the horses digestive systems and therefore the land itself.

7) Project Management

Our herd and the land are managed daily. This includes litter picking, fence checking and health & wellbeing. Dan and our volunteers enjoy engaging with the public who share the land, inviting them to engage on subjects ranging from natural horsemanship, land conservation and how we help our community. All of our sessions are pre-booked and our visitors have presigned due diligence as per our risk assessment.

Additional Sources

- SEEDA Rural Sector Champions programme. A two year South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) funded study (2007-09)
- Kent Downs AONB Unit
- RSPCA - guidance for farmed animals

How we help our community

The aim of Equine Gentling To be a place where the most vulnerable in our community can come to heal, develop and learn in a place that has no judgement and no expectations. Where animals, nature and humans can benefit from just being.

1) Equine assisted healing.

- Who benefits - children, young people and adults who have suffered trauma, are struggling with mental health, those who have additional needs and those who are neurodiverse.
- How - the bond between horse and human nurtures, heals and reduces anxiety.
- What happens - these sessions are usually offered for individuals or family groups and the time is spent freely, maybe just sitting with the horses, grooming them, hugging them, they are very much led by what comes naturally.

2) Our Community Herd

- Who benefits - Our young people. We offer after school sessions, joint family sessions and weekend activity sessions.
- How - Our young people and adults often feel excluded or misunderstood in traditional environments, whether that's in education, social situations or structured therapy. With the herd they learn to develop communication, enhance resilience and build trusting relationships through being part of our community.
- Activities - The activities we offer vary depending on the wishes of both the horses and the young people during each session. Some of the activities include making herb balls for the herd, foraging for natural treats (such as rosehip and dandelions), grooming the horses as well as craft activities on wet weather days such as designing riding hat silks, decorating donation pots and making collages with pictures and drawings.
- Learning - Dan shows them about how a herd exists, how the hierarchy affects how they behave, how to 'listen' to the horses and how to read their signals. He demonstrates the importance of mutual respect, consent and acceptance by encouraging the young people to take responsibility for the equipment, the land around them and for the way they behave with the horses and each other.
- The Board of Youth - made up of around 7 of our young people. They have helped with open days, designing stalls and showing visitors around. They contribute to the activities page on our website, they help run the activities during our sessions, often leading a session's activity.

3) Outreach and Referrals

- Pay it forward - all our individual and family sessions have the option to pay it forward or to use a pay it forward session. This ensures that the funds we receive from our visitors keep us accessible to those who need us regardless of financial status.
- We receive adults and young people from the following organisations
 1. Ethum House Foundation - displaced and refugee children
 2. Sheppard House (NHS) - adults recovering from mental psychosis
 3. Brighton & Hove City Council Social Services

4. SEMH Education Centre Haywards Heath (reference included below)
5. Brighton Youth Centre - an inclusive youth group
6. Adur, Arun and Worthing Assertive Outreach Services (on waiting list)
7. Extratime Brighton - Activity sessions and family events for children and young people with disabilities (on our waiting list)

4) Volunteering and Work Experience

- Work Experience - We have SEN schools on our waiting lists for their young people to volunteer with us weekly during term time (Manor House SEMH School, West Sussex Alternative Provision College and New Barn School for high functioning autistic young people, Horsham)
- Volunteering - We currently have 14 volunteers, some of our volunteers joined us as young people and have developed into self-assured individuals who, once they reached 18, were able to take responsibility for the herd with minimal supervision. This is a practice we aim to expand.

Our Visitors Voices

To whom it may concern My young person has assorted neurodivergent issues which leave her isolated from typical life...friends, work, independence etc.... She has always loved horses but cannot access them in the conventional way, at a stables, at riding lessons etc mostly because so many people are judgemental, intolerant, non inclusive & often just unkind. We came & met the herd only a few times but the difference in her was amazing...Dan & the horses accepted her without question, she was relaxed. An experience worth its weight in gold. Post covid the world has begun to understand the importance of mental health provision, and yet I fear that economically there won't be the funds....the waiting lists for assessments & counselling are ridiculous and the dependence on antidepressants is horrifying. We need person to person and person to animal contact to heal our hearts and souls. Please please for all our sakes, give the herd a home, give these people the support they need.

With love and kindness Helen & Jenna

I writing to let you know what a vital role Equine gentling has played in my daughters life over the last two years. She has Prader Willie Syndrome (PWS), a rare genetic condition which means she is in very real danger of obesity. We have to get her out as much as possible to reduce her capacity for over eating and lethargy, a horrible combination of side affects of her PWS. Dan's herd provide all the distraction we need to get her out and active, and then on top of that they provide her with friendship. A rare commodity when you have this type of disability. She desperately looks forward to her time with these beautiful and loving creatures. They genuinely bring both her and I respite from a very difficult quirk of life, and I know they do the same for others like her. His community days provide a valuable platform for her to meet and share time with other like minded individuals. Dan chooses who will spend time with who very carefully, and for this we are very great full. This herd is a valuable community asset which needs to be nurtured and protected, rarely do people take such time to care for both the

emotions of vulnerable people and animals such as these together so well. Bonds have been formed that are incredibly valuable. I urge you to do everything in your power to preserve this valuable asset, if not for the horses sake, then for the welfare of the children who adore Equine Gentling.

Yours hopefully Mary-Rose Delingpole and Willow Taylo

During Covid Lockdowns we as a family (my children 6yrs and 9yrs) became interested in horses – we came across some of our sudden new nature walks and we began exploring and reading more about them. I came across Dan and Equine Gentling because I wanted my children to be comfortable around horses and understand their world. I was really impressed with the work Dan and his herd had done so far. As a brown, South Asian family, we are aware that we are different to the norm. My husband and I, who have experienced overt and covert discrimination throughout our lives are always a little on edge with new experiences – we just don't know how we are going to be received. The equine world, from afar, has always felt snobby, exclusive and White – I've never come across an image that disproves it. Dan was warm, welcoming and broke all my preconceptions about this and made my whole family feel really comfortable and involved. My children, who I assumed were bored because they were so quiet throughout the 90 minute visit, erupted in excitement as soon as we were back in our car, shouting that it was the most amazing thing they had ever experienced. They said, "we thought we were just going to be behind a fence, not walking and being with the horses!" Dan was amazing, he made the whole family feel really comfortable and my husband, who had never been close to a horse before, stood near and even stroked one. I was amazed by Dan's natural way with his herd, his intuitive understanding of their nature and what they can offer us. I believe that Dan's work with his herd is really important to the wider community and think they are pioneers in their creation of connection and healing. I believe there is so much more potential here and they deserve land and space to do this.

Samreen, Robert, Solomon and Azura Faria

"Dan has a way that makes our young people feel safe emotionally and he involves them in showing care towards the herd. He talks through with the students how the horses are feeling, their previous experiences and almost shows how they too can heal and be different and better. What he has brought to our young people is invaluable not just to these horses he is working with but with the people he introduces to the herd. He brings to society a special something that we really need to sit back and remember."

Deputy Head - Alternative Provision School East Sussex Full reference available on request

My daughter has always loved horses but she never felt comfortable at traditional riding schools as her disabilities were rarely accommodated and she was often subjected to unkind remarks from neurotypical children. We tried the RDA but as a family we were never comfortable with the way the horses were treated, they always seemed so sad! We came across Dan on a walk during lockdown and it was instantly obvious that we had stumbled across something completely different. She is so happy spending time with the horses, sometimes she grooms them, sometimes she hugs them and sometimes she just sits and watches. As lockdown eased

we got to meet other families and take the horses out for walks. My daughter has made 3 friends through Equine Gentling who are a similar age as her and who also find social interaction challenging.

Parent of a 12 year old girl who attends a SEN school.

We were fortunate enough to have Equine Gentling on our doorstep. From a young age my children saw the herd and have developed a strong love for horses. As a mum of two children, to visit the herd has meant so much for me and helped to calm my anxiety. Meeting with each horse is truly wonderful- it's peaceful, majestic and a connection like no other. Equine Gentling offers so much to the community- where else can you learn and meet horses in such a close-up and ethical way? Where else can you connect with nature and horses without having to pay through the nose for it (e.g riding schools, where the horses are 'working' to please people, rather than a mutual two-way relationship). Equine Gentling not only rehabilitates horses, but also the people visiting. This concept is surely welcome more than ever at a time when mental health cases are at an all time high and local mental health services are struggling to cope with demand and underfunded. So many children, individuals and horses are dependant on Equine Gentling, including my Nephew who has Autism. To meet the herd has greatly improved his mental well-being and happiness. It would be terribly distressing for him and others with additional needs (who visit the herd), if Equine Gentling was no longer operational. Equine Gentling is also a lifeline for parents, where they get the chance to find comfort in the whole experience and reduce their levels of stress and anxiety. Equine Gentling is not the only horse charity offering support for rescue animals and therapy for people. The BBC recently covered a story of an intensive care Sister suffering mental health issues following the death of her Nephew during the Covid pandemic:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-57284179> The Way of the Horse charity (<https://www.thewayofthehorse.co.uk/>) are helping her, along with many other people and rescue horses. However, this charity is based in Leicester. Equine Gentling must be saved for our community here. Imagine what good could come of providing support for this group and investing in this opportunity for future generations to come. Please search your heart and do the right, moral and compassionate thing. Thank you so much. Charlotte McElborough - via email

I can't even explain how Dan help me and my family. Let me try, my son loves horses like they are in their freedom and that's what is very unique and amazing to be part of the herd, where he can express him self by hugging horses and grooming them or playing with them, Dominick is always looking forward this visit and leaving very relaxed. For me as I'm focused in natural horsemanship is great opportunity to be a volunteer in Dan's herd, where I can observe communication and learn every day as Dan's knowledge and passion is really inspiring. We learned to be patient, to be kind to each other and you actually feel like a part of something like a family. When I feel that my day was really difficult I come to Dan's and got again the feeling for life, he is helping, caring and well educated person and his project already helped a lot of children and adults and can help many more. I can't imagine my life without escapes to Dan's herd

Eva

Dan's experience

Dan grew up on a dairy and tourist attraction farm in Somerset. During which he and his foster mother competed in a variety of equestrian disciplines. Throughout his equine career Dan has written as an expert for a variety of equine magazines including Horse & Rider and Carriage Driving Magazine. He also gave many talks on equine behaviour and lifestyle management including at Your Horse Live International Show, London. This has resulted in him consulting for World Horse Welfare along with other Rescue and Welfare Organisations.

1. Dartmoor Conservation Herd Dan worked with a variety of Dartmoor conservation charities looking at the management and welfare of over 40 different wild herds and their owners on the Dartmoor Commoners Council. This included a conservation herd run by Dan and Sarah Edwards (reference to follow) who now graze that same herd of 6 ponies and 1 Arab horse on the Highlands of Scotland. In fact both of our Dartmoor Hill Ponies are related and rescued from the same feral herd. Dan also worked with The Friends of the Dartmoor Hill Ponies (reference attached)

2. Ditchling - reference attached

3. Henfield - Truleigh Hill We were conservation grazing on the side of Truleigh Hill. We were invited to graze there after the landowner had been approached by The National Park to have Truleigh Hill grazed. Due to being ungrazed for so long, this was having a negative impact on the biodiversity of the land. From October 2020 to August 2021 there has been a huge positive impact already which can be clarified by Phillipa Morrison-Price (Lead Ranger - Eastern Downs).

Grant Applications

BHCC Youth Led Grant 2021

We have recently been awarded the full amount which will go towards our youth group sessions as well as care for the herd.