

Welcoming Your New Horse: Tips for a Successful Transition

When a horse arrives at a new barn or property, it's normal for them to go through a short adjustment period. Horses rely heavily on routine and herd dynamics, so a new environment can feel stressful at first.

Below are some important things to know, what to expect, and some tips and suggestions to help the introductory transition go smoother for the horse and for you.

1. Initial Stress or Anxiety

Many horses show mild to severe stress for the first few days.

You might notice:

- Calling or whinnying for other horses
- Pacing the fence line
- Sweating or acting alert
- Less appetite at first

This usually settles within 24–72 hours, though some horses may take a week or more.

2. Changes in Eating & Drinking

A horse may:

- Eat less hay or grain initially
- Drink less water (especially if water tastes different)

Tips:

- Offer the same hay or feed they were used to if possible. **NOTE:** Pellets must be soaked. Please fill the bucket with water to the pellet line and let soak until the pellets are soft and fluffy.
- Make sure fresh water is always available
- Add a little electrolytes or soak feed to encourage drinking. Please consult your veterinarian and have on hand Banamine and Dorm. These are helpful for calming and useful if colic presents. Please have electrolyte PASTE as well as powder. Paste is helpful if your horse refuses to drink.

3. Herd Dynamics

If other horses are present, there will be pecking-order behavior.

Expect:

- Ear pinning
- Chasing
- Posturing
- Kicking

This is normal but should be supervised at first. Introduce horses over a fence for a few days before turning them out together. **NOTE:** Do not put your horse in turn out with another horse before proper introductions.

4. Environmental Adjustment

Especially in a place like Arizona, horses may need time to adapt to:

- New terrain
- Desert plants
- Different footing
- Heat and dry climate

Watch for:

- Curiosity or spookiness in new surroundings.
- Learning where water, shade, and shelter are.

5. Health Monitoring

It's smart to keep a close eye on the horse for the first week.

Check for:

- Manure output (important sign of gut health)
- Normal appetite
- No nasal discharge or coughing
- Normal temperature (around 99–101°F)
- Travel and stress can sometimes trigger shipping fever or colic, so monitoring is important.

6. Adjustment Timeline

Typical adjustment stages:

Day 1–3: Alert, nervous, exploring

Day 3–7: Settling into routine

2–3 weeks: Fully comfortable and bonded with herd

Best Things You Can Do:

Keep routine consistent (feeding, turnout, work)

- Allow quiet time to settle
- Avoid intense training the first few days
- Provide safe fencing and calm herd introductions

7. Looking Into the Near Future:

Please contact your Veterinarian and Farrier. Schedule their next appointments according to due dates.

- Hoof Trims/Shoes
- Dental (Exam/Floating)
- Vaccinations/Deworming