Equus caballus

System: Terrestrial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Family</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Chordata</td>
<td>Mammalia</td>
<td>Perissodactyla</td>
<td>Equidae</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Common name: feral horse (English), horse (English)

Synonym

Similar species

Summary

Equus caballus is a large non-ruminant herbivorous mammal that is not dissimilar in appearance to the domestic horse. E. caballus has an average lifespan of 25 - 30 years, with 20 years of sexual activity. While preferred habitat is open grasslands, E. caballus has been also known to invade desert, semi-desert plains, coastal areas, subalpine regions, tropical savannah grasslands, forests, scrublands and wetlands. In some regions they are protected as they are seen as a valuable asset, but in other places they are considered a pest, as they compete with livestock for resources, degrade plant habitats by grazing and trampling, contaminate water sources, damage fences and decrease native biodiversity.

Species Description

The feral horse, Equus caballus, is morphologically similar to the domestic horse, standing an average of 1 - 1.6 m high at the shoulder and weighing 350 - 450 kg. General appearance is variable, including coat colour that ranges from black, brown, tan and white to white with patches of orange or brown. Coat hairs are short and fine, tail is relatively short and there is hair present on the forehead (forelock) and along the neck (mane). The average lifespan of E. caballus is 25 - 30 years. (Csurhes et al. 2009).

Notes

In the Australian Alps, foxes, hares (Lepus europaeus), house mice (Mus musculus), feral horses (Equus caballus) and weeds have all increased their presence at higher altitudes most likely due to changes in climate (Green and Pickering 2002).

Habitat Description

While preferred habitat is open grasslands, Equus caballus has been also known to invade desert, semi-desert plains, coastal areas, subalpine regions, tropical savannah grasslands, forests, scrublands and wetlands.
General Impacts

*Equus caballus* is a grazer, feeding on approximately 2–2.5% of its bodyweight in plant matter per day. This grazing, along with trampling, contributes to decreases in native plant biodiversity, and can also fracture saturated turf. This can lead to increased opportunity for weed establishment, soil erosion and water ponding. Soil compaction can be another issue. Changes in community composition related to feral horse populations have been observed for fish, birds, small mammals, reptiles, crabs and ants. Feral horses compete with livestock for resources, can damage fences and water bodies and can foul water sources through fecal contamination. They can also harbour exotic diseases, such as equine influenza, and may introduce and spread weeds via seed present in fecal matter, manes and tails. (Csurhes *et al.* 2009; Department of the Environment and Heritage 2004; Nimmo & Miller 2007).

Management Info

Control methods include fertility control, capturing excess animals and offering adoption, shooting - both ground shooting and aerial via helicopters, trapping, and mustering. (Csurhes *et al.* 2009; Department of the Environment and Heritage, Australia 2004; Nimmo & Miller 2007). Please follow this link for details on the management of feral horses in Australia.

Principal source: Csurhes, Steve; Gina Paroz and Anna Markula, 2009. Pest animal risk assessment Feral horse *Equus caballus* Biosecurity Queensland Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

Compiler: IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment

Review:

Publication date: 2010-06-08

ALIEN RANGE

[1] AFRICA
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[1] CHILE
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[1] HISPANIOLA
[1] MEXICO
[1] PERU
[1] RUSSIAN FEDERATION
[1] SRI LANKA
[1] UNITED KINGDOM
[1] WEST INDIES

Red List assessed species 12: CR = 6; EN = 2; VU = 2; NT = 2;
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: *Equus caballus*

**Cadiscus aquaticus** CR
**Equus ferus** CR
**Mastacomys fuscus** NT
**Pinguecula nevadensis** EN
**Taudactylus pleione** CR
**Turnix melanogaster** VU
**Cyclura carinata** CR
**Laterallus spilonotus** VU
**Phyllotis bonariensis** NT
**Pterodroma phaeopygia** CR
**Todiramphus godefroyi** CR
**Vini ultramarina** EN

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**
10 references found for *Equus caballus*

**Management information**
**Summary:** Available from: http://sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/BVrevisitas/biologia/v17n2/pdf/a07v17n2.pdf [Accessed 23 February 2011]

**IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)., 2010. A Compilation of Information Sources for Conservation Managers.**
**Summary:** This compilation of information sources can be sorted on keywords for example: Baits & Lures, Non Target Species, Eradication, Monitoring, Risk Assessment, Weeds, Herbicides etc. This compilation is at present in Excel format, this will be web-enabled as a searchable database shortly. This version of the database has been developed by the IUCN SSC ISSG as part of an Overseas Territories Environmental Programme funded project XOT603 in partnership with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment. The version is a work under progress, the ISSG will manage, maintain and enhance the database with current and newly published information, reports, journal articles etc.

**General information**
**Summary:** Available from: http://www.iucn-isg.org/actionplan/ch2/tciguana.php [Accessed 26 July 2010]

*Csurhes, Steve; Gina Paroz and Anna Markula, 2009. Pest animal risk assessment Feral horse *Equus caballus*. Biosecurity Queensland Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation*
**Summary:** Available from: [Accessed 26 July 2010]

*Department of the Environment and Heritage, Australia, 2004. Feral horse (*Equus caballus*) and feral donkey (*Equus asinus*).*

**Summary:** Available from: [Accessed 26 July 2010]

**Summary:** Available from: [Accessed 26 July 2010]