

## *Equus caballus*

**System:** Terrestrial

Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family
Animalia	Chordata	Mammalia	Perissodactyla	Equidae

**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.



[view this species on IUCN Red List](#)

## 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 to [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  
[1] AUSTRALIA  
[1] CHILE  
[1] ECUADOR  
[1] FRANCE  
[1] GREECE  
[1] IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF  
[1] NEW ZEALAND  
[1] PORTUGAL  
[1] SPAIN  
[1] TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS  
[3] UNITED STATES

[2] ARGENTINA  
[1] CANADA  
[1] COLOMBIA  
[1] FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS)  
[1] FRENCH SOUTHERN TERRITORIES  
[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;**

[Cadiscus aquaticus](#) CR

[Equus ferus](#) CR

[Mastacomys fuscus](#) NT

[Pinguicula nevadensis](#) EN

[Taudactylus pleione](#) CR

[Turnix melanogaster](#) VU

[Cyclura carinata](#) CR

[Laterallus spilonotus](#) VU

[Phyllotis bonariensis](#) NT

[Pterodroma phaeopygia](#) CR

[Todiramphus godeffroyi](#) CR

[Vini ultramarina](#) EN

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Global Invasive Species Database (GISD) 2025. Species profile *Equus caballus*. Available from: <https://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=1632> [Accessed 29 August 2025]

## 10 references found for *Equus caballus*

### Management information

Cossios E. Daniel, 2010. Vertebrados naturalizados en el Perú: historia y estado del conocimiento (Naturalised vertebrates in Peru: history and state of knowledge) Rev. peru. biol. 17(2): 179 - 189 (Agosto 2010)

**Summary:** Available from: <http://sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/BVrevistas/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 compilation 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

Alberts, Allison (comp. & ed.) (1999). West Indian Iguanas: Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan. IUCN/SSC West Indian Iguana Specialist Group. Chapter 2: Gerber, Glenn and John Iverson, Turks and Caicos iguana *Cyclura carinata carinata*

**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

Department of Environment and Coastal Resources, TCI Government, 2003. Turks & Caicos Iguana, *Cyclura carinata carinata*: 2005-2009. Conservation and Management Plan. Developed in a workshop held on 24-25 November 2003 in Providenciales, Turks & Caicos Islands, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the IUCN/SSC Iguana Specialist Group, and hosted by the Turks & Caicos Department of Environment and Coastal Resources, and the Turks & Caicos National Trust.

**Summary:** Available from: [http://www.iguanafoundation.org/downloads/pdf/TCI-CAMP-4July2007\\_Sml.pdf](http://www.iguanafoundation.org/downloads/pdf/TCI-CAMP-4July2007_Sml.pdf) [Accessed 26 July 2010]

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**Summary:** Available from: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/6037/0> [Accessed 26 July 2010]

Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS), 2010. *Equus caballus* Linnaeus, 1758

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