

Now and in the Future



Rhôs Pasture grazing © DNPA

Ponies are less discerning eaters than both cattle and sheep. This is a very important attribute in areas such as Dartmoor where much of the semi-natural vegetation is rough, and of nutrient poor quality. Grazing of the semi-natural vegetation is important to the survival of many rare species. Although long vegetation is an essential part of many species habitats, so is the provision of short-cropped areas.

Current Schemes

Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme

The Dartmoor Pony Moorland Scheme was introduced in 1998, by the Duchy of Cornwall and the Dartmoor Pony

Society, to improve the bloodline of ponies living on the commons of Dartmoor and thereby ensuring their suitability to the Dartmoor environment. The Scheme is supported by Dartmoor National Park Authority. The Scheme invites owners of suitable mares, living on the Dartmoor commons, to put them into a newtake (moorland enclosure) with a pure-bred Dartmoor stallion, between 1 May and 1 October. All the mares are inspected by the Dartmoor Pony Society and an incentive payment is made to their owners. Any foals born are inspected and, if approved, are registered with the Dartmoor Pony Society.

Dartmoor National Park Authority Pony Herd Agreements

These were introduced in 2000 to support existing herds on its own land. Three herds are now supported on Holne Moor and it is hoped to support another herd on Haytor Down. Pony keepers receive financial support to maintain the herds on the land. Ponies are inspected annually by an independent vet to ensure their continued well being.

The Dartmoor National Park Authority Pony Conservation Grazing Fund

To ensure that all ponies on the commons receive support the National Park Authority and Defra will provide payments for ponies that graze the commons under Defra's ESA agri-environment scheme. This is to ensure that the ponies continue to carry out their vital role as conservation grazers. This support amounts to almost £50,000 per year. New agri-environment schemes will take over from ESA and hopefully be able to take up this support, so that the NPA support will only be required as a temporary measure.

Mobile grazing herd

The National Park Authority supports three herds of native Dartmoor ponies on common land it owns at Holne. Some of the male offspring have been castrated (gelded) and are now used to graze other important habitats. This has proved so successful that there are now also three gelded herds.

The Spirit of the pony



Now and in the Future (cont.)

Current Schemes

Dartmoor Commoners' Council's Stallion Support Scheme

This was introduced by the Dartmoor Commoners' Council in 1999 to ensure that ponies not hardy enough to survive on the moor are not bred. Regulations have been put in place by the Council to ensure that only stallions that have been inspected and approved by an independent vet to be hardy, healthy, and of good confirmation are allowed out on the commons.



Stallion © DNPA

To ensure that mares do not mate with their own offspring all colt foals must come off the moor during their first year. They must remain off the commons until after they are two years old. They may then only go back on the commons if they have been approved as a stallion through the scheme, or castrated.

Dartmoor Pony Preservation Scheme

The Dartmoor Pony Society (DPS) has been concerned that the local indigenous breed, the native Dartmoor pony, might disappear from the commons forever as the total population level on Dartmoor has dropped down to less than 500. The DPS have set up the Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust, a registered charity, to ensure that the native Dartmoor pony does not become extinct. This charity raises money to maintain the gene pool.

The Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust welcomes the public to see native Dartmoor ponies at Brimpts Farm near Dartmeet, free of charge.

Passports



Pony and foal © DNPA

European Union legislation requires each semi-feral pony to have a passport and Britain is required to comply with this legislation. Although the legislation is put in place on a Europe wide basis to enable meat products to be traced, the benefit of such a system in this country is that each pony will have a unique number, or brand, that will identify it from birth. It is hoped that this will encourage people to recognise the worth of the pony and thereby increase its market value.

The Government recognises that it is uneconomical for pony keepers to obtain passports for individual animals in a herd and has given Dartmoor a special derogation, which means that the ponies will only need a passport if they sold or moved from the moor.

The Spirit of the pony

