

STABLE VISES

According to experts, at least half of stalled horses show signs of stress-induced tendencies. These tendencies often develop into what are commonly referred to as stable vices. Also known as stereotypic behavior, experts widely link these habits to anxiety and frustration related to horses feeding, social and leisure-time activities. The following is a short list of equine stereotypies by category from the ASPCA's Virtual Pet Behaviorist website article, "Compulsive Behavior in Horses":

ORAL STEREOTYPIES

- **Cribbing** - Horses who crib place their upper teeth on a stationary object—such as the feed bin, their stall door or a fence board—and then arch their necks, pull a big gulp of air into their upper throat and abruptly release the air with a grunt. Approximately 4% of adult horses crib. Wind-sucking is similar to cribbing, but the horse doesn't use a stationary object to steady herself when she takes the air back into her throat.
- **Wood-Chewing** - Horses who chew wood nibble on any available wood surface. Many people confuse wood-chewing with cribbing—probably because both cause damage to the horse's stall—but horses who wood-chew don't grab the wood with their teeth, pull back and grunt as do horses who crib. Approximately 12% of adult horses wood-chew.

LOCOMOTOR STEREOTYPIES

- **Weaving** - Horses who weave rock back and forth against or in front of their stall doors or stall walls. If prevented from weaving against the stall door, they'll weave wherever they are standing. Approximately 3% of adult horses weave.
- **Head-Bobbing** - Horses who head-bob stand relatively still and bob their heads up and down repeatedly.
- **Head-Weaving** - Horses who head-weave stand still and repeatedly swing their heads from side to side. Similar to head-bobbing and head-weaving are head-shaking and head-nodding. Shaking and nodding can develop because of inadequate stimulation, but they can also be the result of improper bit fit or other problems associated with the horse's mouth, or flying insects around the horse's face.
- **Stallwalking or Circling** - Stallwalking horses usually pace back and forth close to the front of their stalls, although some circle continuously around the entire stall. Approximately 2% of adult horses stallwalk.

SELF-MUTILATION

- **Self-Biting** - Self-biting, sometimes referred to as "flank-biting," describes repeated biting by horses at their flanks, legs or tail, or at the sides of their body and their lower shoulder blade area. Horses are very flexible and can bite at flies and other pests, of course, but horses who self-bite do so over and over when there is nothing touching their skin.
- **Wall-Kicking** - Wall-kicking is common in horses, particularly at feeding times, but this behavior can develop into a stereotypy that occurs in the absence of specific triggers.