

The Evolution of the Horse

You buy your first ever horse and you look into its eyes... How far back can you see? You let your imagination run wild as you begin to imagine what you think a horse would have looked like millions of years ago.



Hyracothium

Fossils discovered have proved that the horse I am about to tell you about is the oldest evolution. This horse had a different diet to the modern horse, because its diet was based on leaves. Living in a hot, humid and marshy area with ground like quick sand, The Hyracothium required toes to spread out body weight more efficiently so it wouldn't sink as easily and they could remain on the surface free to roam the area they occupied. Their eating style was browser meaning they picked at several different fruits and berries.

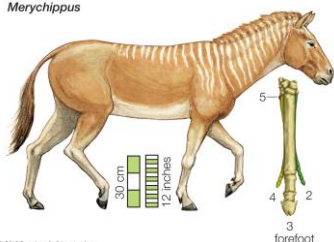
This horse was said to have lived **58-40 million** years ago!

Mesohippus



A few million years later, came the mesohippus (middle horse). As they began to live on grassland, their diets began to change. These horses were larger in size than their past evolutions. They also had stronger hind legs that allowed them to escape from predators approaching them in the open fields in which they lived. This horse was said to live **35-20 million** years ago. This evolution of horse had split hooves (this was solely a transformation of going from toes to hard hooves) .

Merychippus



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Merychippus

The Merychippus was a grazer and was also the first evolution of the horse that had its eyes on the side! These were so they could keep track of any predators chasing them. This type of horse had even longer legs to give them more of an advantage to escape from their predators. The Merychippus lived on grass plains. For faster speeds on hard ground, this horse had a hard hoof.



Equus

The equus is the modern day horse and was also the only horse evolution to be domesticated. The strength of this horse allowed for it to pull weights as much 3 times their body weight allowing for them to help humans travel. This domestication occurred 3 thousand years ago and has had an outstanding effect on humanity as we currently know it. From farming, to war and even travel! It has changed the world as we

know it.

- ★ **Horses** can sleep both lying down and standing up.
- ★ **Horses** can run shortly after birth.
- ★ Domestic **horses** have a lifespan of around 25 years.
- ★ A 19th century **horse** named 'Old Billy' is said to have lived 62 years.
- ★ **Horses** have around 205 bones in their skeleton.

You step back away from the horse's eye, now knowing the backstory of the horse.