

Letter from Tom Morris' great-grandfather: Matthew Beaumont Parrington

Parrington was an estate manager and farmer and wrote this letter to his son who was going to war

Ashprington, Totnes, Devon
September 29, 1914

...Now for hints on horses although I do hope you won't have to go after all. The war must change in its nature entirely before long. It can't possibly last as it is and where it is...

When campaigning, there are lots of little things you can do with horses which may save you a lot of trouble and a lot of danger. First about food: you will have that all in your instructions I suppose, but for an ordinary horse doing ordinary work, 15lbs good oats and about 10lbs – 12lbs of clean hay or other bulky food per day. Also when you get a chance give a few beetroot or other roots cut up in their corn. Carrots are the best. A horse should be fed three times a day but you must feed when you can, water as often as possible but never just before fast work. When you off saddle at night let them drink as much as they like before food when they come in tired.

Never sit in the saddle when you are not wanted there, always dismount. And if you come to a very stiff climb always get off and lead your horse if you can or if you may. You will be surprised what these little considerations do for a horse. And you must remember that mounted troops are only useful so long as their horses are fit and well.

After a long journey, never take off the saddle until his back has cooled (this applies to collars and harness too) down. Slacken the girth and lift the saddle a little and put it back again until the back is cool. Then unsaddle and put on cloth. Then a very good plan is to go round in the evening when horses are picketed and feel their ears. If they are cold and damp they must be dried. Rub till they are dry with your hands if you have no cloth. Horses which have been a little overdone will often go wrong in the night if care is not taken in this way.

Then lumps and bumps. Never mind if it's a bruise or a sprain, bathe it immediately you stop work for the day with a sponge and fresh supplies of hot water till the place feels quite cooked through, then put a bandage (not tight) round it to keep away the cold. If there is no hot water, get a linen bandage or

several and wrap them loosely round the places after thoroughly wetting them in cold water, and mind they keep wet all night. In the morning if he must work or not, put the wet bandages on before starting and leave them on all day, but of course they must be tight enough to keep from slipping.

If you can, always take hoods with you for putting on the horses at night after their heads and ears have been well dried. No one knows the great benefit this is. Never put a damp rug on a horse. If he is very hot when he has finished work and a cold wind blowing, put a thick pad of hay or straw or dry litter on his loins, then throw a rug loosely over it. This will enable a horse to dry without getting cold, also without wetting his cloth through with steam. Horses out of condition, especially young ones, you will have a lot of trouble with in this way as, after hard work, they keep breaking out into fresh sweats and will soon start shivering, when inflammation may sit in at any moment. A third of a pint of whisky with twice or three times the quantity of water poured down his throat will often do wonders for a tired working horse and bring him to his feed, and it can never do any harm.

