



Price: £4.99

ISBN: ISBN 978 1 84114 730 7 (Book)

ISBN 978 1 84114 805 2 (Box)

Format: Hardback with colour cover, 64pp,
155x110mm, illustrated throughout
in colour.

Imprint: Halsgrove

Published: May 2008

Unit consists of 10 books supplied
in a point of sale display box.

Book barcoded at £4.99

Box barcoded at £49.90

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THE SPIRIT OF **NEW FOREST PONIES**

Mike Read

Established as a royal hunting preserve over 900 years ago, the New Forest has seen Commoners' 'rights of pasture' since 1016. It was then that the first ponies were turned out onto the Forest. The New Forest Pony is a unique breed and one of its outstanding characteristics is its good-natured temperament. This, combined with its muscular frame, makes it an excellent riding pony and as such it has been exported widely around the world. But there is no better place to view the ponies than on their native heath, either in the shows like the New Forest & Hampshire County Show or within the special habitat of the New Forest National Park.

Renowned photographer Mike Read reveals the special 'spirit' of the ponies as he captures the showing classes, the annual round-ups (drifts), the only true remaining point-to-point race in Britain, held annually in December, and above all these lovely animals at their very best in the peerless landscape of the New Forest itself.



Mike Read is an established professional wildlife and landscape photographer, writer, lecturer and tour guide. His previous books for Halsgrove include the acclaimed *New Forest Moods* and *Discover the New Forest*, and he has also contributed to numerous other books, magazines and partworks.



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Pony drifts take place at high speed and it pays not to get in the way of thundering hooves!



Example of a double page spread.



Foals are usually born in April or May. Here, a mare stands proudly by as her new youngster has its picture taken.



A mare leaves the pound after temporary penning at a drift near Turf Hill.



Above left: Three competitors battle it out for first place in a 2005 Veterans' race at the Boxing Day point-to-point.

Above right: When foals of this age get together there can often be fun and frolics.



Left: Rider and helpers on foot work together to turn this mare and foal towards the pound.