

FACT SHEET



Department of Animal Science, University of
Connecticut

Effective Horse Management – Horse Management Series

Enjoying the Winter with Your Horse

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One of the benefits of living in places that experience true winter is the ability to enjoy the changing seasons. If you and your horse are properly prepared, there is no reason that you cannot enjoy the winter together. Here are a few tips for being prepared, we will use the song Let It Snow to guide us!

L – Winter is a great time for LEARNing something new! Whether attending an adult education class, reading a new book on training techniques or horse care, checking out webcasts or courses at My Horse University (www.myhorseuniversity.com) or articles and learning lessons at eXtension.org/horses (<https://horses.extension.org/>), you are sure to find some new information that will help you out in the years to come.

E – Winter is a good time to examine your horse’s ENVIRONMENT and what you would like to change. Maybe your paddock is a muddy mess or you would like to upgrade your facilities,

study the problem and figure out a plan! Here are some ideas of what to do: https://ctrcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GOODHORSEKEEPINGBMP_WEB.pdf

T – Winter is a good time to keep up on or get involved in TRAINING! There is that new trainer you heard about, or that clinic you have been wanting to attend, and don't forget the CT Horse Symposium! (<http://animalscience.uconn.edu/horseSymp/HorseSymposium.php>).

I – Finding ways to deal with ICE is important. Some simple things you can do includes obtaining some footwear traction devices for you when walking on ice, such as yaktrax, stabilicers, or microspikes (UConn Extension does not promote any of these specific products). Also have some ice melt (pet-safe products of course!) and/or kitty litter or sand on hand to spread where you and the horses walk.

T – This is a great time to check your TACK. You want to make sure that everything you are using is safe and comfortable for your horse. Look at your halter – is it fraying, ripped, buckles torn out? Is it time for a replacement? Look at your bridle – is there a throatlatch? Are screws intact? Are buckles working? Are holes ripped out or tearing? Is the leather tearing or wearing? Check your saddle – is the tree in good shape? On the English saddle, is the safety latch on your stirrups down and open so that your stirrup will slide off if you get hung up so that you will not be dragged? Is the padding in the panels of your saddle even? Are there any sharp points on the underside of your saddle? Are your leather holes stretching or tearing? How is the stitching? What condition is your harness in? Does anything need cleaning? Are your pads clean and free of burrs, etc? Do you need other equipment or tack that you don't have?

S – SHOES can make all the difference. If you plan on hitting the trails this winter, you will want to consider getting snowball pads and perhaps adding borium or frost-ribbed nails. Speak to your farrier about which traction device will work best for you.

N - NUTRITION is also something that is good to get a handle on in the winter. Often, horse owners mistakenly increase grain in the winter to provide horses with more energy, even though the horse may be doing less work. Instead, it is best to provide more forage; since the heat of hay fermentation in the gut will help your horse stay warmer in colder temperatures. More hay also more closely mimics the horse's evolutionary diet. This is also a great time to practice body condition scoring. There is a great module available for learning how to do this online at <https://horses.extension.org/>. Body condition scoring the horse monthly will help you know when it is time to change your horse's diet or increase exercise.

O – Now is the time to ORGANIZE. You can organize things you will need by season into a trunk or plastic container, cleaning anything that is dirty as you go. It's also a good time to reorganize the tack room, making sure you have enough hooks, saddle stands, or places to hang that harness or training gear! This is a good time to strategize for the upcoming show season, trail outings and other events. Make a list of what you need every time you trailer your horse that you can refer to so that you don't forget anything! It can really save a lot of time and, although you may keep adding to it like I do, this handy list will help you out. Also, this is a good time to get your horse's papers in order. Have a file folder for registration papers, veterinary related papers, papers you need for travel such as Coggins, association memberships,

etc. and keep them alphabetized and in order where you can refer to them or file things in them to help you stay organized.

W – WATER can be a real problem in the winter time. Making sure that horses drink enough water will keep them healthy, hydrated, and help prevent impaction colic. Reduced water intake results in reduced feed consumption by horses. Studies have shown that horses prefer water that is not too cold. A 2003 study by the University of Pennsylvania found that horses drank 41% more water when it was heated rather than when it was allowed to stay at near freezing temperatures. During winter months, increase the temperature of water to 45 to 65 degrees F to maximize consumption. Also, be sure not to also have icy water present because when icy water was present, horses would drink the icy water exclusively but less volume compared to when only heated water was present.

Winter doesn't have to be dreaded. We can all find something to appreciate about winter. By following these tips, you can enhance you and your horse's life. If you have any questions about horse management, feel free to contact me at jenifer.nadeau@uconn.edu or (860) 486-4471 and check out our website at

<http://animalscience.uconn.edu/equine/extension/generalInformation.php> or <https://animalscience.uconn.edu/equine-extension-events.php>

Sources and Suggested Reading

1. CT Horse Environmental Awareness Program - https://ctrcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/GOODHORSEKEEPINGBMP_WEB.pdf
2. CT Horse Symposium <http://animalscience.uconn.edu/horseSymp/HorseSymposium.php>
3. Emergency Preparedness Help - <https://aaep.org/horse-owners/owner-guidelines/owner-emergency-disaster-and-preparedness>
4. Horse Facility Articles - <https://horses.extension.org/category/facilities/>
5. Horse Nutrition Articles - <https://horses.extension.org/category/nutrition/>
6. Kristula, M.A.; McDonnell, S.M. Drinking water temperature affects consumption of water during cold weather in ponies. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 41: 155-160, 1994.
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8. My Horse University www.myhorseuniversity.com
9. UConn Equine Extension Events <https://animalscience.uconn.edu/equine-extension-events.php>
10. UConn Equine Extension Information <http://animalscience.uconn.edu/equine/extension/generalInformation.php>

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