



From the Equine newsletter, November 1997

WINTERIZING YOUR HORSE

Winter is here. So much for an Indian summer in the Northwest. Well, there are a few things we should do to help our hoofed friends at this time of year.

First of all, make sure they are up to date on their preventative maintenance program (vaccines and deworming.) EEE, WEE and tetanus should be given once a year. Influenza and rhinopneumonitis every three to six months depending upon your animal's use and living environment. Potomac Horse Fever, strangles and rabies are once a year vaccines and given to horses as needed on an individual basis. Deworming should be done on a two to three month cycle. This will depend upon whether your horse is on a daily wormer, out on pasture, or in a stall. Don't forget to alternate dewormers, so the intestinal parasites are less likely to build up resistance to one product. There are several different paste wormers available. Also it is a good idea to do a fecal lab test one or two times a year to check the effectiveness of your deworming program.

Don't forget about lice! During the winter months, especially in horses, these pesky creatures can be a detriment to weak, older or young horses by depleting the horse of its nutrients. Ivomec and dusting the horse and premises will aid in the removal of these external parasites.

A second important factor during the winter months is paying attention to the amount of water your horse consumes. This will aid in the prevention of impaction colics. Quite frequently with an automatic waterer, it is difficult to monitor water intake and some horses do not drink enough when the weather is extremely cold. Some may require water trough heaters or warm water added to their water buckets. Adding salt or electrolytes to their diet may help increase water intake. Bran mashes and exercise may aid in prevention of impaction colic during the winter months.

Teeth are also important to check before winter, especially in older horses. If your horse has sharp points or caps from uneven wear, he may have a sore mouth, or being chewing improperly, which prevents optimal utilization of nutrients. These sharp points can also make the horse less responsive to the bit. Remember not only old horses have dental problems. Most horses require teeth floating at least once a year.

Most horses will tolerate the cold temperatures well. However, the dietary energy (calories) required to maintain an individual horse's temperature in colder weather can increase as much as 10-13% and even more if the weather is wet and cold. Thin, older, and debilitated horses will require more nutrients because they lack the fat cover to act as insulation. Blanketing your horse during these months will help. But remember, blankets should be cleaned regularly, as wet or dirty blankets are of no help to your horse.

Most horses will adapt to this increased demand for nutrients by increasing the total amount of feed they consume in 24 hours, assuming they have free access to hay or pasture. If you need to supplement the forage, grain or mineral supplements can be added. If an additional source of high energy or fat is needed, shredded beet pulp, or corn oil can be added to the diet.

Lastly, don't forget about your horse's feet. During these wet winter months it is very important to clean and pick out the soles. If needed treat with kopertox, iodine, or thrush buster. All of these products will aid in prevention of thrush, white line disease, and abscesses. Having a dry place to stand for 10-12 hours a day will allow the feet to dry out.