

HAYES EQUINE VETERINARY SERVICES

6544 FM 1753
Katie Hayes, DVM
www.hayesequinevet.com

DENISON, TX 75021

(903) 465-0777
Meghan McCarville, DVM
Find us on Facebook

January 2017 Newsletter

Keeping Those Ponies Warm!

This time of year, we constantly get questions about whether or not to blanket their horses. It's a constant worry, especially with the memes going around on social media about bringing your animals inside when it gets cold out. Unfortunately, while I can remember my childhood dream of my horse staying in my bedroom, I'm positive my parents would have put the nix on my horse staying in my bedroom, no matter the temperature.

Horses are most comfortable at a temperature of around 60 degrees fahrenheit. Of course, this really depends on their hair coat and the amount of shelter provided. Horses with a good hair coat that have adequate shelter can withstand temperatures that drop to -40F. And it's pretty rare that the temperatures here in north Texas drop that low.

Adequate shelter is that which allows the horse to get out of the weather. This includes a roof and at least two sides, though three sides are better. This allows the horse to stay dry and avoid the worst of the wind. A horse's instinct tells him to do these things in order to stay warm. If shelter is provided, most horses don't need blankets, even in North Texas. A horse's natural mechanism for staying warm is to puff up his coat and trap air, which is nature's best insulation. Blanketing a horse keeps the coat from doing this, and it can also easily overheat the horse if he has a thick coat already.



Horses that DO need blankets include older, thin horses that have little to no body fat to keep them warm. It also includes horses that have an inadequate hair coat. It's important to remember though, that the horse needs to be DRY and the blanket needs to be DRY. Putting a dry blanket on a wet coat will just insulate the water inside and keep the horse from drying off. A wet blanket will allow the horse to get chilled.

And it's important to choose the correct blanket for your horse. There are so many types of blankets and all of them have different benefits. Turnout blankets are those that are meant to be weather proof, while stable blankets are not. When choosing a turnout blanket, the "Denier" level tells the thickness of the weave of the outer layer. The higher the "D," the more weatherproof. The weight of the blanket in grams tells you how thick the blanket is. The higher the "g," the warmer the blanket. So, an old, thin horse on a 10-degree day might need a 1200D blanket with a 600g filler, while the 10-year-old gelding might only need a 600D blanket with a 160g filler. Or even better, no blanket at all.

When in doubt, sometimes the best thing for your horse is to give it a little extra hay. Just like a hot bowl of soup, a few flakes of good quality hay will provide your horse with warmth from the inside out. The act of fermentation produces heat, which will warm your horse even better than a blanket on the coldest of days.

Food for thought:

Dr. Hayes attended the AAEP this past December and brought home a few interesting tidbits:

- Gastrogard (for equine gastric ulcers) should be fed on an empty stomach as this allows for better absorption of the medication
- Supplements containing blue green algae can cause liver and brain damage, so avoid supplements containing this product
- Worming foals should start between 2.5 weeks and 3 months of age with Pyrantel, with a fecal two weeks later. They should be wormed again at 4-6 months with Panacur for ascarids.
- Feeding starved horses starts with just feeding hay to avoid refeeding diarrhea. Horses with a body condition score of 1 should be fed 6 meals a day. As the body condition increases, the number of meals can decrease and the amount can increase.
- For those horses receiving hock injections, feeding a joint supplement can increase the amount of time between injections. In one particular study, supplements containing resveratrol (a nutraceutical anti-inflammatory) did better than horses receiving no supplements.

New Year's Resolutions:

Don't forget it's that time of year to worm for bots! 30 days after the first freeze is the best time to deworm for this, so hit them with a dose of ivermectin or moxidectin. And be sure not to underdose! Parasite resistance is becoming a much bigger issue these days.

And don't forget the coggins test! Getting it in January means you are ready when the big shows, trail rides, rodeos, and events come around.

With all of these warm days, please be sure your horses are drinking water! Impactions have been rampant lately as horses aren't drinking enough to stay hydrated.