

Winter - Make sure you're prepared with Sovereign Equestrian

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The winter months for horse owners can feel like an endless cycle of dark nights and even bleaker mornings; the mercury drops towards freezing, the nights get colder and rain starts to become an issue. As with any aspect of caring for your horses, it's important to be pro-active in tackling the challenges that will come with the inevitable, adverse weather conditions of winter. At Sovereign Equestrian, we can guide you through some of the problems you may face and how to keep your horse healthy and happy during winter.

Mud Fever: this refers to a wide range of skin problems, mainly caused by an infectious agent that thrives in muddy wet conditions. The infection can stay dormant in the skin and become active when the skin becomes damaged, for example, when the skin is exposed to long periods of wetting causing an acute inflammatory reaction.

Mud fever is not just caused by prolonged wet conditions, there are many factors, such as, standing in deep or soiled bedding, constantly washing limbs, skin trauma and white limbs, are just a few. Mud fever is recognised by the distribution of lesions or scabs. Some horses also suffer from lameness, heat and swelling.

The treatment of mud fever is to keep the skin as clean and dry as possible. Usually this can only be achieved if the horse is removed from the wet and mud. Also, the scabs should be removed to allow direct access for treatment. Once the limb is clean and dry a variety of creams and lotions are available to help reduce the inflammation.

Temperature Control: As the weather gets more harsh, and the temperatures start to plummet, a horse grows a thicker coat. This is designed to insulate and protect the horse from the adverse weather. Therefore, if your horse

is not clipped then they do not need to have thick winter rugs on. However, if your horse is being exercised their winter coat can cause a problem, therefore, either a full, blanket or trace clip helps keep the horse cooler during exercise. But the loss of a coat needs to be compensated with the attachment of a rug.

Clean Water In the depths of winter it's often the case that drinking water for horses can freeze. Therefore, it is important for horses to have access to

clean water as dehydration increases the risk of conditions, such as; impaction colic. Therefore, you should make regular checks to your horse's water, both in the field and stable, to ensure it is still drinkable. If you have automatic drinkers in the stable make sure to fill water buckets as pipes will freeze and they take considerable time to defrost.

Calorie Intake: During colder weather horses burn more calories to stay warm. Therefore, their calorie intake needs to increase. Hay is an excellent source of calories, and during snowfall can give horses something to eat without having to forage for it.

Most of all during the winter it is important to keep your horse in their usual routine. To exercise them as much as you are able to, as this will considerably diminish the overall effects of the winter weather. After exercise it is essential to make sure your horse is thoroughly cool and dry after work before they are rugged up and left, as your horse can easily develop a chill.

Winter can be a bleak time when owning a horse, so it is important just to do your best and try to implement these simple tips to ensure that you're preventing a number of winter related problems. As always though, remember to have fun will your horses!

About Sovereign Equestrian

At Sovereign Equestrian, we train, maintain, and care for our horses so that they become exceptional performers across all disciplines. We know that a fit and healthy horse is a happy horse, and a happy horse is a successful horse. We want to share some of our techniques with you because, with the right care your horse can reach its true potential.

T +44 (0)7762 880800
E charlotte@sovereignequestrian.co.uk
W www.sovereignequestrian.co.uk



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www.sovereignequestrian.co.uk