

Caring for your horse through winter

Winter can bring some big management changes to your horse.

- Did you know hay has a much lower water content than grass? This alongside colder water in their bucket can often lead to dehydration and in severe cases impactions – which is a common cause of colic. To help avoid this: Monitor your horses water intake (a normal day >15L)
- Feed little and often to encourage the digestive tract to keep moving
- Tailoring the feed to their energy requirements and how this may have changed over the winter months
- Always make changes to their diet slowly
- Check your pastures for acorns and sycamore seeds – fence off & rake any areas, ensure there is enough grazing and supply hay where necessary
- Make any management changes slowly (eg gradually reducing their turnout over a few weeks)

Keeping your horses moving

- The warm up and cool down are crucial parts of protecting your athletes and this becomes even more important over the winter months. Make sure you warm your horse up slowly to reduce risk of injury and let their body temperature slowly return to normal after exercise.
- Osteoarthritis is one of the most common diseases affecting the equine population, this stiffness is often exacerbated over the winter months as horses spend longer periods standing in. There are many management options available to your horses



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For any advice please call to speak to one of our vets directly:
01344 426066



Mud fever (pastern dermatitis)

As the Autumn season is now officially here, we are seeing increasing cases of this common condition. Mud fever (also known as cracked heels and pastern dermatitis) can be seen in horses of any type, breed or age, but is most commonly seen in horses with feathers or white socks.

Signs to note are swollen lower limbs, thickened or scaly skin, hair loss, reddened and inflamed skin, itching which can result in traumatic lesions and yellow and foul smelling discharge. Not all of these symptoms are seen in every case as cases differ in severity on an individual basis.

There are a number of **different causes** of this condition including bacterial & fungal infestations, ectoparasites and photosensitivity.

Treatment is often just simple changes in management where possible, for example, removal from wet and muddy pastures and clipping feathers to improve hygiene. It is important to only use certain topical medications that have been approved by your veterinarian as too many medications/incorrect treatment may further irritate lesions present.

Cleaning lesions with dilute quantities of topical antiseptics is important to minimise the risk of infection, as once the lesions are infected they become increasingly hot, swollen and painful.

Even with appropriate treatment and excellent management, recurrence is common. This makes mud fever a frustrating disease for owners and veterinarians alike, however with time and commitment the condition can usually be resolved.

Prevention is achieved through maintaining clean and dry skin which is difficult in the wet weather but regular removal of mud through grooming does have an impact. Clipping makes keeping clean easier and barrier creams should be used with caution as they retain moisture.

If you have any cause for concern or suspect mud fever in your own horse, please contact our office to make an appointment with one of our vets.

