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If you have a question about how Diamond V Yeast Culture can help your horse look, feel and perform its best, write to us at P.O. Box 74570, Cedar Rapids, IA 52407 USA or visit our website at www.diamondv.com.



Equine Q & A

My horses seem to drink less water in the winter. How can I encourage them to drink?

When environmental temperature drops, water consumption of horses often declines. Inadequate water intake will often lead to decreased feed intake, and horses may not be able to maintain body temperature or weight during frigid weather. Without sufficient water intake, gastrointestinal problems such as impaction colic may occur. Therefore, it is essential to encourage horses to drink during cold weather.

Large stock tanks are appropriate waterers for horses. Tanks should be situated in an area that receives as much sunlight as possible. Insulating or partially burying the trough will help keep water from freezing. Covering a portion of the trough top while leaving a large enough hole for the horses to drink comfortably may also prevent freezing. If ice does form, it should be chipped away and removed several times daily to allow free access to water.

Water intake will usually increase by 40% when the water temperature is warmed from near freezing to between 45° and 65° F. Electric water heaters can decrease winter maintenance of stock tanks, but the water should be touched daily to determine the temperature of the water and to ensure the heater is not shorting out. A mild electrical shock will rarely harm a horse, but it will likely keep a horse from drinking. In addition to heaters, water turbulence created by pumps or aerators may aid in keeping troughs ice-free. Although automatic waterers freeze infrequently, they should be checked twice daily to ensure they are functioning properly.

Because of limited grazing opportunities in the winter, horses are often fed meals of dried forages and concentrates. It has been estimated that horses consume 75 to 80% of their daily water intake within one to two hours of eating. An adequate supply of mild-temperature water (45° to 65° F) should therefore always be available around mealtimes.

Hot bran mashes do little to warm the horse in cold weather but may be a way to increase liquid intake, particularly if a supply of heated water is not available. Soaked beet pulp may provide the horse with some water as well.

Horses should not be expected to meet water require-

ments by eating snow or chewing ice. It is estimated that for every gallon of water required by the horse, ten gallons of snow must be ingested.

I am not able to ride my horse during cold weather as often as I do in warmer months. How can I keep him from getting so hyper?

Keeping energy levels in check in wintry weather requires a few simple management changes. The first involves diet evaluation. Because the horse will be ridden less frequently, his workload will decrease, and there may be less demand for high-energy feeds such as concentrates in his diet. If the horse is an easy keeper, for instance, he may be fed a bare-bones diet of high-quality grass hay and an appropriate vitamin and mineral supplement. Coupled with whatever

forage he can acquire during turnout, this may be sufficient to keep him in adequate body condition. If the horse cannot maintain his body weight on forage alone, he may be fed concentrates that contain high levels of fat. Calories derived from fat do not cause a horse to become difficult to handle, as is often the case with feeds rich in starch. A high-fat concentrate will have a crude fat value of 6% or more on the feed tag. Alternatively, a fat-rich supplement can be added to the ration to boost calorie intake. Heat-stabilized rice bran is a popular supplement, and as with high-fat feeds, will not cause a horse to become unmanageable. By adding rice bran to the ration, the amount of concentrate fed will likely decrease due to the caloric density of the supplemental fat source. Any

change in diet should be performed slowly over several days.

In addition to dietary adjustments, the horse should be allowed ample free exercise. If a horse is given sufficient time to kick up its heels daily—bucking, running, and playing—he will likely be more manageable. Turnout is also psychologically stimulating for horses, and those confined to stalls for extended periods of time often develop stable vices such as cribbing, wood chewing, and weaving. If a horse must be kept in a stall due to inclement weather or limited pasture availability, a rubber ball or one-gallon plastic jug suspended from the ceiling at about the height of the horse's withers may alleviate boredom. Daily grooming and exercise, even if it is only hand-walking, may also relieve boredom in stall-bound horses. ☺☺



Photo by Mark Lewellyn

Kentucky Equine Research Team Member Directory



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