

The Brooks Hoof Beat



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BROOKS PERFORMANCE HORSE FEEDS
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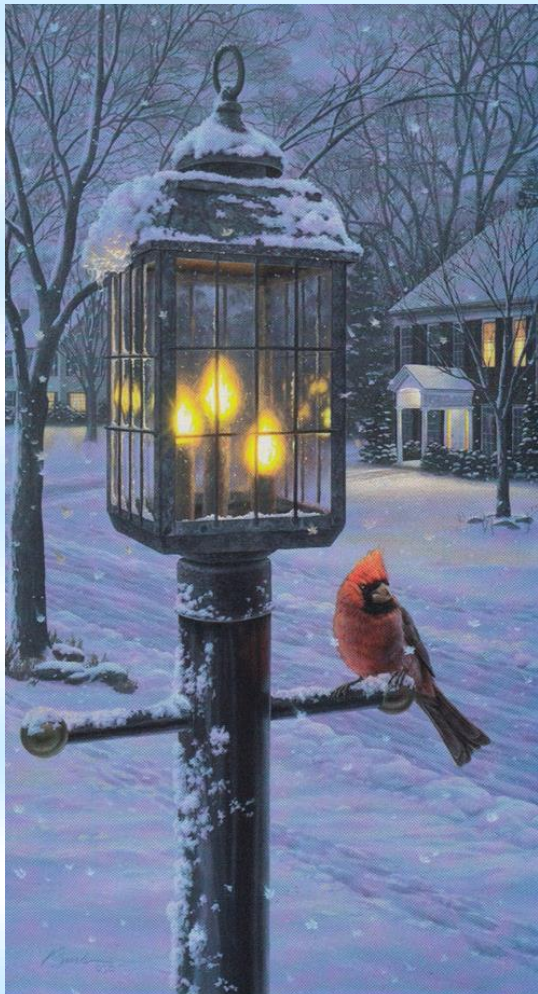
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The cost of not feeding grain!



Its winter in Canada and many horses return to a basic “maintenance” ration after having been on more of a “performance” ration during the summer show or recreational riding season. For many horse owners this is a time to give their over stressed bank account a break and offer their horse(s) a “maintenance” diet based on hay and hopefully a balancer pellet to provide the necessary minerals and vitamins for good health. For some (“easy keepers”) this is quite adequate as lots of hay provides enough calories to keep the horse from losing weight and heat from digestion to battle the winter chill. But many horses are unable to maintain their weight on hay alone and could lose 50 to 100 pounds over the winter. The cost of regaining that weight prior to the beginning of show season may eat up whatever was saved and more over the winter in the extra cost of feeding for weight gain.

Working horses need more calories to gain weight than non-working horses

could lose a ½ of a pound per day because of a calorie deficit of as much as 4-5 Mega calories per day. Add the extra stress of maintenance during cold weather and you could be seeing ¾ to a pound a day in weight loss. That could be as much as 90-100 pounds over the winter.

To avoid this weight loss 5 ½ pounds per day of Fit & Fibre balances the ration with adequate calories as well as minerals and vitamins. The extra cost over the cost of a balancer pellet (Enhancer) is about \$1.30 per day. Over a period from December to the end of March (121 days) that can result in a weight loss of as much as 100 pounds on some horses. You have saved about \$157.00 on your grain bill for that horse, but the question is this. What is the cost to regain that weight if you start “conditioning” at the beginning of April? Keep in mind that you will probably also increase your riding frequency and intensity as the warmer weather approaches.

Depending on the increased riding frequency and intensity the horse’s daily calorie requirements could increase by 15-25%. So you could be trying to regain the lost weight while at the same time feeding to meet the extra energy requirements of more intense riding. If you want your horse looking its best by show season you might have less than three months to regain the lost weight. As riding intensity increases the calories required for weight gain in addition to what is required for maintenance and work increase as well. While a non-working horse can gain weight on around 7 extra mega calories per day over maintenance this increases to 9-10 mega calories for a working horse.

What does this mean? Even a calorie dense feed like Fibre Omega Plus will require an extra 4-6 pounds per day over what a working horse needs to regain that weight. That could be as much as \$2.50 extra cost per day. If you want to regain that weight in a short time the cost is much greater. In the end you could encounter significant cost to regain what was lost over the winter.

Dan Irwin- Marketing & Sales Brooks Feeds

The best approach. Feed your horse year round to meet its calorie requirements whether just for maintenance or while engaged in a high energy activity.



Prevention of Impaction Colic in Winter Weather



Winter, with its icy water sources and lowered equine activity levels, is one of the riskiest times for horses that tend to develop intestinal impaction. Fresh grass has been replaced in the diet by dry hay; horses tend to drink less when offered very cold water; and with a break in regular training and exercise, they may not sweat enough to feel thirsty. These are all contributing factors to impaction colic because they are all conducive to slower movement of ingested material through the digestive tract. *A horse that has an intestinal impaction is often less interested in eating. He may seem depressed and show little interest in moving around or interacting with people or other horses.*

Regular intake of suitable forage, adequate chewing and moistening of this forage with saliva, and proper hydration status are important in preventing impaction. Exercise also encourages movement of ingested material. Horse owners need to be sure they are carrying out management steps to help their horses avoid problems.

Horses should always have access to a source of clean water that is not too cold. Tank or bucket heaters can be used to keep water at a temperature that is well above freezing. The water doesn't need to be hot or even warm; a temperature in the mid-forties to mid-fifties Fahrenheit is fine. If heaters are not used, owners need to change the water in the horse's buckets often enough to be sure the water is at an inviting temperature. If the horses aren't drinking plenty of water every day, don't ignore this situation; figure out the problem and correct it. Offering the right kind of hay is important. Hay should be clean, sweet-smelling, and free of mold. It should not contain a large percentage of tough, stemmy vegetation and weeds. Hay can be chopped or steamed to make it somewhat easier to chew and digest. Hay cubes or pellets, fed either dry or soaked, are other alternatives. If horses are not eating the hay that is provided, it is possible that it is moldy or dusty or unappealing for some other reason. It is vitally important that horses consume plenty of forage, so finding something that they are willing to eat is a priority.

Horses should be on a suitable deworming schedule before going into the winter months. Heavy loads of parasites can cause damage to the walls of the intestines, possibly restricting the flow of ingested material. Having the horse's teeth examined and any problems corrected before cold weather arrives is another way to be sure that all ingested feed and hay can be thoroughly chewed and moistened.

Some horses are pastured during spring, summer, and fall, and then are confined to barns for the winter months. This may be necessary for very young, very old, or ill horses, but for most equines, **standing in a stall for hours every day increases the risk of impaction.** Owners should try to keep horses moving as much as possible during the winter, either by riding or driving them regularly or by turning out for at least a few hours each day. Pasture turnout is ideal, but even a period of free exercise in an indoor arena will help to encourage movement of material through the digestive tract.

Owners need to monitor not just the amount of water that the horse is drinking, but the moisture content of the manure the horse is passing. Very dry manure may be a sign that the horse is becoming dehydrated. Wetting the hay and adding water to the grain ration will help to get a bit more liquid into the horse, but the owner should also check to be sure clean, fresh, not-too-cold water is always available.

A horse that has an intestinal impaction is often less interested in eating. He may seem depressed and show little interest in moving around or interacting with people or other horses. He will probably begin to display common colic signs such as pawing, nipping or kicking at his belly, and wanting to lie down or roll. Impaction colic can be treated by a veterinarian, and waiting to see if the horse will feel better on his own is a bad idea. While some colic cases do resolve without treatment, impaction colic usually needs to be dealt with promptly. The

veterinarian can decide whether the horse needs to be treated with fluids, intestinal lubricants, pain medications, or even surgery in some cases.

Obviously, it is better to avoid impaction than to allow it to develop. To minimize this problem, owners should make water available; monitor water intake and manure production; keep to a schedule of deworming and dental care for their horses; offer clean hay that is free of coarse material; and provide as much exercise as possible through the winter months.

KER staff article

The Brooks Difference

We believe nothing defines the “Brooks Difference” more than the quality of our feeds and the knowledgeable service our consultants offer to our clients. Here are just a couple of examples of how we made a difference in the nutritional health of our clients horses through quality products and informed staff.



“A picture is worth a thousand words. Looking for top quality feed and an easy program that suits my Hunter/Jumpers and lesson horses was difficult. I always felt that my feed program was missing something. Then I met the team of Brooks Feed and Laurie Bishop. Not only have I found a custom feed program that is meeting my horses’ needs, their sustainable energy and quiet minds have given me peace of mind and top results in the show ring this season. From their superior customer service and knowledgeable specialists, I highly recommend making a call and seeing what Brooks can do for you and your horses, you will not be disappointed.”

Lori Shaw of Sunbridge Farm



Sandy Cuddihey of North Gower Ontario wrote to us about her horse Helmsley. Helmsley was stricken with Potomac Horse Fever this past summer. With assistance from Prescott Animal Hospital and Brooks representative Tania Laframboise, Helmsley (left centre) is back to his old self.

“I want to thank you so much for helping me out last night with Helmsley. I cannot thank you enough for answering my questions and helping me at such a late hour. I am so thankful for your help once again and answering my questions. Helmsley thanks you as well. Not sure what we would do without you!”

Sandy Cuddihey

Cold-Weather Horse Diets

By Kentucky Equine Research Staff

Those cold winter months of mud, slush, and frozen ground...owners dread them, while feed dealers, anticipating increased sales, may look forward to them. The horses? For the most part, they don't seem to care, and in fact, many seem to be energized by the crisp air and chilly breezes.

Fermentation of fiber in the horse's hindgut is the major heat source that keeps horses comfortable through the colder months. While very young, very old, or ailing horses may need specific changes in stable routine, healthy horses with an intact coat can usually tolerate winter weather with few problems if owners pay attention to basic feeding and management principles.

Water If it's not the most important winter consideration, water is at least near the top of the list. Even when the horse is not working and sweating, water consumption is necessary to prevent impaction of ingested material in the intestinal tract. Horses naturally tend to drink somewhat less water when the temperature drops, so every effort should be made to ensure sufficient intake. Owners can start with these management steps:

Provide a constant supply of clean water that is not too cold. Experts disagree on the exact "favorite" water temperature. Horses will drink water that is quite cold, but they tend to ingest a larger amount when water is warmed to around 45 or 50 degrees F (4 to 15 degrees C). Water that is hot to the touch is not suitable.

Make sure water sources aren't frozen, either by using insulated buckets, installing an electric heater, or frequently providing warmed water. NOTE: being shocked will back horses off a water tank, even if they are extremely thirsty. If you have a heated water tank that horses are not using, check and check again (use an extremely sensitive voltmeter, or schedule a visit from an electrician) to be certain there is no "stray" voltage. Some horses will react to voltage that is too slight for humans to detect, while other horses (and most cattle) don't seem to be bothered.

Adding water to feed, giving occasional bran mashes, and sprinkling salt on feed to stimulate a thirst response are all useful techniques, but these measures by themselves may not ensure adequate water intake. Also, don't count on horses eating snow to stay hydrated. Melting snow in the mouth and stomach uses so much energy that it's difficult for the horse to maintain a safe body temperature.

Hay Fermentation of fiber in the horse's hindgut is the major heat source that keeps horses comfortable through the colder months. Therefore, a steady supply of hay is crucial. While many horses continue to graze some pasture, hay usually provides the majority of winter forage. Type and amount of hay will vary depending on a horse's size, metabolism, and workload. At a minimum, start with the basic guideline of feeding enough hay to equal about 1.5 % to 2% of the horse's body weight (around 15 to 20 pounds a day for a horse weighing 1000 pounds and increase as needed when the temperature drops.

Easy keepers and horses doing minimal work get along well on medium-quality grass hay (may have been cut when a little more mature than optimum).

Horses with average metabolisms will do better on good-quality grass hay (mostly free of weeds, made from grass that was not over-mature at cutting).

Heavily exercised horses or those with special needs (older horses, thin horses, horses recovering from illness) may need a grass-legume mix or even a straight alfalfa hay.

As a general rule, shivering horses that regularly clean up every scrap of hay probably need to have their hay ration increased. Horses that simply enjoy eating will also consume every flake in sight, but increasing their ration is not a good idea. You can tell the difference by using a weight tape every few weeks through the winter to track changes, uncovering the situation of heavy-coated horses that appear fat when they are actually losing weight. Likewise, horses that leave some hay untouched may seem to have been overfed, but it is also possible they are leaving weeds, rough plants, or flakes containing mold. Inspect the rejected material and purchase better-quality hay if necessary.

Stalled horses have plenty of time to pick through their hay, munching a few mouthfuls now and then as the hours pass. Pastured horses that eat hay in a group setting need to be monitored to be sure that low-status animals have adequate access to hay. Very timid horses may need to be fed hay separately or in smaller groups. Spacing hay piles widely in the field and offering several extra piles can minimize this problem.

Concentrates Winter diets usually include concentrates for two reasons: nutrients and energy. Hay and dormant grasses don't have the same nutritional value as fresh pasture, and this lack can be overcome by feeding a fortified textured or pelleted feed. Concentrates also pack a lot more energy than grass or hay, and horses that are eating plenty of good-quality hay and are still not maintaining their weight may need additional calories in cold, windy, damp weather.

As with hay selection, the type of concentrate depends on the individual horse, and most feed dealers offer a variety of choices to meet the needs of young, mature, old, working, or breeding horses. Feeds containing beet pulp or soy hulls, so-called super fibers, include highly digestible fiber along with more traditional sources of energy. **Flax Appeal, and/or Equi-Jewel rice bran**, boost the caloric density of a horse's ration. Overweight horses that need vitamins and minerals in a low-calorie package can be given a supplement that provides only these nutrients. **ie All Phase 20/Enhancer**. Remember to feed no more than about five pounds of pellets or textured feed at one time, breaking larger feedings into several small meals spaced throughout the day.

Beyond the basics Water, hay, concentrated feed...a winter diet containing these elements is a good starting point. Good managers, however, ensure the comfort of the horses in their care by attending to a few more details.

- Horses should have access to shelter from extreme weather. This can be a barn, run-in shed, windbreak, or even a grove of trees. As with access to hay, low-status horses may be blocked from shelter by more aggressive animals, and alternative grouping may be necessary.
- Owners should be sure horses have proper dental care and periodic deworming so that feed can be properly digested and utilized.
- Daily inspection of horses in winter months should include a light grooming, an all-over check for injuries, and an inspection for skin problems.
- Water consumption and manure consistency should be monitored (very dry manure is a sign that the horse may be becoming dehydrated).

Merry Christmas
and a
Happy Healthy
2016