

Supplying Water to your Horse in Cold Weather

By Amy K. McLean, Equine Specialist, University of Wyoming

Authored Feb 2010

One of the most important nutrients for equine is water. There are five main nutrients that animals need in order to survive, 1) Water, 2) Energy, 3) Protein, 4) Vitamins, and 5) Minerals. Most equine can only go a few days without water. In the winter month's owners must take more pre-cautions in supplying water to their horses due to it freezing and the cold temperatures. Often times equine will decrease water consumption in the winter months due to the cold temperatures. Therefore, it's important that you remember to check your water at least once ideally twice a day to make sure it's not frozen. Also, if you are using a water heater in your tanks make sure there's not a short in the electric cord and your horse doesn't get shocked when drinking. Water is essential for digestion. Horses will typically drink between 8-12 gallons of water per day. Most consumption will take place within 3 hours after consuming a meal.

So, if your horse is not drinking considering the following tips:

- 1) Keeping the water temperature around 45-65°F
- 2) Offer your horse warm water at least once a day
- 3) Make sure the area around the source of water is not frozen or icy so the horse can easily access the source of water without slipping or injuring itself.
- 4) Check manure for moisture and color as an indication if the horse is consuming water
- 5) Consider adding a water heater to keep the water from freezing
- 6) Make sure there's not an electric short and the horse is not getting electrocuted when drinking
- 7) Make sure the water is clean and free of any foreign material
- 8) Break off ice and remove the ice from the water
- 9) Feed a bran mash to increase water intake
- 10) Consider increasing forage intake prior to a cold snap, this in return will increase water consumption.

For more information on winter care and watering your horse in cold weather check out this article:

http://www.extension.org/pages/Cold_Weather_Feeding_Practices_for_Horses#The_Imporrtance_of_Water

This article was first published in the University of Wyoming's publication "Riding Point with Animal Science"