

# Hoof Beats North

The Newsletter of Competitive Trail Riding in Alaska



Fall / Winter 2014

## A Guide to Surviving the Bald Mountain Butt Buster

by Colleen Fisk

*Oh boy this is gonna suck*, I thought as I looked down the steep, rutted, slippery hill towards the trail I was supposed to be on. Those are words I've never said on a competitive trail ride but I and 13 others were stuck up on a mountain and had a challenge getting back down again safely. We were able to do so through cooperation, good training, level heads, and luck. Hopefully others can learn from our adventure.

On the second day of competition in the Bald Mountain Butt Buster (BMBB), after a night of hard rain, we crossed the Little Susitna River and climbed partially up the namesake of the ride, Bald Mountain, just outside Wasilla. After we rode past Pat Carney's homestead, the trail climbed up to the highest part of the ride, where in previous years management had staged a P&R stop. My 20 year old mare Jazzy and I had done several competitions on this same trail, but I was having a hard time remembering

where that was, as it looked different from my memory when it was beaten down by P&R crews in previous years. I was riding Competitive Pleasure with longtime friends Kathy Foxley and Jane Larson, and new friend and first time rider Jeanie Fabich. We didn't see the next ribbon and weren't sure if we should continue up the hill or start heading down, where the trail y'd. We opted for up, as although we had rested the horses frequently from the previous incline, we thought the "butt buster" surely went further.

We were wrong.

Unfortunately, it was not a simple matter of turning around once we realized our mistake. The horses had slipped and stumbled their way up the trail that was much worse than it had looked from the bottom. A rider ahead of us was on a horse that refused to go farther. So Jazzy and I precariously passed them to keep moving. As we got to a flatter spot where we could rest, the rider I had just passed started sliding sideways as her saddle started slipping. She jumped off just as we reached the level spot, before the saddle was completely under her horse. In addition to a slipped saddle, some nerves were rattled from the treacherous climb we had just done and the five of us on that spot started discussing whether we should continue up the hill or go back down. We didn't see more ribbons, but we did see at least one pair of horse tracks going up hill. We weren't sure if the Open riders would have been ahead of us or if we were some of the first riders through after the point riders. We knew only

a few other CP riders were ahead of us. As we were discussing our options, several sets of CP riders started coming up behind us, so we opted to try farther up so that unfamiliar horses were not crowded together on the small level area.

The trail kept getting worse and when we got to an even smaller level area than the last, we stopped and thought it would be best to turn back. Francine Long and her two junior riding partners passed us and went farther up the trail to scout it out. They saw that a fallen tree effectively created a dead end. At this point, 14 of the 16 CP riders were on varying areas of the hill. Although my group (of five at that point) shouted down to the group behind us to stay there, they didn't understand and came up anyway, creating a very crowded situation. With the slipperiness of the hill, most were nervous to ride back down. Jeanie and I worked on calming the fears of several riders, (Continued on [page 2](#))



Colleen Fisk and Jasmine's Magic  
Photo by Lisa Kelly

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and I volunteered to ride down first. I also reiterated that although NATRC rules state that you are not supposed to make any forward progress on your own two feet, safety comes first for everybody in the organization, and that I didn't think any one would be disqualified for walking their horse in hand down the hill if that was the safest option. Secondly, as we were off trail anyway, we would not be making any forward progress on the marked trail.

This was the point where I was the most nervous, and thought that the climb down would be challenging, but I kept myself breathing evenly to keep my horse calm as well. Jazzy and I slowly walked down the hill, with me on her back, and I was grateful for all the times I had worked with her on precise control of speed. We walked very slowly until we started approaching a level spot and a small group of CP riders. As I got closer to them, one of them, Ruth, was dismounting but her jacket caught on her saddle horn. The jacket was choking her, and she couldn't get it free or lift herself up enough to loosen it. Her sister Marilou kept their two horses still and asked me to stop where I was. Although I was on a steep section, I kept Jazzy still so as not to push Marilou's or Ruth's horses to want to move away. A third rider quickly ran over and within several tense seconds got Ruth free. I breathed a huge sigh of relief and joined them, ensuring Ruth was unhurt.

Finally I was able to move on down the hill. I dismounted, removed Jazzy's bridle, and connected her lead rope that I always have with me. We started walking side by side down the slippery hill, and I walked slowly and carefully so I would not fall. Jazzy wanted to walk much faster than was safe, but I kept her at a pace that was comfortable for me. In that way, we made it back to the marked trail safely. Others started following behind, Jeanie second down the hill. However, after Jeanie, some riders were uncomfortable, or could not keep their horses at a safe pace, as they were rushing to join our horses at the bottom. The riders started releasing or losing control of their horses, and Jeanie and I caught them at the bot-

tom. It was a nerve-wracking experience, catching horses, tying them up as quick as we could with quick-release knots to one of the cottonwoods



CP riders grouped on the mountain  
Photo by Claudia Sihler



Jane Larson (62) and Colleen Fisk (57)  
catch loose horses at the bottom of the hill.  
Photo by Jeanie Fabich



Horses tied to trees at the bottom of the hill.  
Photo by Jeanie Fabich

tom. It was a nerve-wracking experience, catching horses, tying them up as quick as we could with quick-release knots to one of the cottonwoods

the hill unharmed although perhaps a bit muddier than before.

Once we made it back on trail and saw the ribbons again (obvious once we got down there), we were 45 minutes behind our maximum time. Still, we made sure everyone made it down the hill safely and were ready to go before we all started off again. At the end of the day, we made it back to camp safely, on time and in a good mood.

Looking back on this ride, I learned some new ideas and reinforced old ones. Although I had been off trail several times before in other rides, this was the most dangerous situation I had encountered because of it. I hope that I can pass on some tips to remember to avoid similar situations in the future:

1. Work together with your partner or fellow competitors to figure out tough situations. If we had worked together better in the first place, we might not have missed the painfully obvious ribbons marking the trail. Still, we all came together and cooperated to make it back down safely. Don't depend on solely yourself or your partner, but work together, and don't blindly follow someone else.
2. Practice ground work and other training in situations other than the ideal environment. Get your horse good at listening to you at home or in an arena, but don't forget you need those skills when you are in uncomfortable situations such as a steep hill, narrow trails, or around unfamiliar horses.
3. Don't panic. This of course is easier said than done, but so important as your horse takes most of its attitude cues from its rider. You'll both be safer if you work on staying calm yourself.

The Bald Mountain Butt Buster was almost two months ago as I (finally) write this article, but I will strive to remember these lessons of cooperation, training and staying calm. We had good luck on our side that none of us or our horses were hurt, and in the end had an overall enjoyable ride.

I know that we all get in similar situations, and although I hope it never happens to any of us, when it does, try to keep these points in mind and get home safely.

Happy Trails!



## From the Editor...

If you have been thinking that you might have missed an issue of this newsletter, you're right, you did! There should have been an issue out in August, but because of "stuff," that issue was skipped. But I hope this one makes up for that missed issue! I've crammed it with results and photos from this past summer's Bald Mountain Butt Buster ride in Wasilla, and included a couple of winter readiness articles as well.

I was happy to be able to ride my mare Frilly in the BMBB, and I was pleased with how well she did. I rode her in Novice Division, thinking it would be the best for her. And she did fine, but I really think she would have preferred the speed and distance of Open! I don't call her the "Energizer Bunny" for nothing! The photo below is her and I somewhere along the trail. The photo was taken by Ivana Haverlikova, and I thank Ivana for sending it to me.

Speaking of photos, the ones presented in this issue were copied from ones posted on the CTR Alaska Facebook page, and were taken by a variety of photographers. They include Lisa Kelly, Autumn Bentz, Nancy Williams, Claudia Sihler, Deanna Quinn, Chase Quinn, Jeanie Fabich, Shirley Wilson and Darby Hogan. I would like to thank them all for posting their photos for everyone to enjoy! If I've wrongly credited any of the photos, I apologize and if you know who actually took the picture, thank them for me!

On another subject, plans are moving forward for the 2015 Challenge of the North Competitive Trail ride, to be held in the Fairbanks area on July 17-19, 2015. We have been able to enlist the assistance of some new faces on the management team. This will be a transition year, as Lezlie and I move toward retiring from the management of the ride. The new management team brings a new energy and enthusiasm for CTR with them, and we are confident that they will continue to bring the Alaska competitors a quality trail riding experience. I will keep everyone posted with new develop-

ments through the coming months. If you are a Facebook person, you can keep up with the progress of the ride through the Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride page and also on the CTR Alaska page.

I hope everyone has a good winter and gets as much saddle time as possible between now and next spring!

Take care and see you on the trails!

*Laurie Knuutila*



Ivana Haverlikova photo

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# 2014 Bald Mountain Butt Buster Ride Results

## How to read these results:

1<sup>st</sup> # = Horse's Placing / 2<sup>nd</sup> # = Rider's Placing  
CO = Completion Only / P = Pulled / DO = Distance Only / DQ = Disqualified

### Bald Mountain

#### Butt Buster A (Two Day Ride)

7/19-20/2014 R1A-AK

A-O/CP Total Riders: 30

Chair: Katrina Carney

Judges: Kay Gunckel DVM, Karel Waugh

Open Sweepstakes:

Army's Cache of Class/Wilson, Kristin-97

#### Open Heavyweight

1/2 NWMF Melody/Hrncir, Dorothy

2/3 Nebbi from Arctic Arrow/Rogde, Amy

3/1 Wild Ladys Nite/Dent, Susan

4/4 Alaskas Cocoa King/O'Brien, Sandra

#### Open Lightweight

1/1 Willow Bey Star/Grogan, Brenda

2/3 Dynamic's Spirit/Mielke, Terri

3/4 Monet's Image/Moore, Debra

4/2 Flash's Gentleman Jim/  
Forrester, Donna

5/6 She's A Dandy/Bentz, Autumn

6/5 Luke/Onorati, Melissa

P Dixie/Daugherty, JoAnn

#### Open Junior

1/1 Army's Cache of Class/Wilson, Kristin

2/2 Poncho/Barkman, Elyssa

#### Competitive/Pleasure

1/1 Jasmine's Magic/Fisk, Colleen

2/2 Genuine Arctic Attitude/  
McDonough, Barbara

3/3 Gunner/Allen, Mallori

4/4 Brisco/Stevenson, Kelly

5/ Gjof/Sihler, Frank

6/ Rio/Hedum, Ruth

/5 Spiffy/Gotschall, Sarah

/6 Traveller/Foxley, Kathleen

HMU First Danse/Vroman, Jaida

Gypsy/Kirk, Ashlynn

Montana/Larson, Jane

Katla/Sihler, Claudia

My Kia to Success/Fabich, Jeanie

Raudhetta/Culhane, Alys

Susie/Long, Francine

Rio Ruque/Ash, Heather

Damis Sahhar/Douthit, Marilou

### Bald Mountain

#### Butt Buster B (One Day Ride)

7/19/2014 R1A-AK

B-N Total Riders: 15

Chair: Katrina Carney

Judges: Kay Gunckel DVM, Karel Waugh

Novice Sweepstakes:

Stoney/Haverlikova, Ivana-98

#### Novice Heavyweight

1/6 Stoney/Haverlikova, Ivana

2/4 Tinni/Praetorius, Pete

3/DO Rowdy's RibbonsNLace/  
Knuutila, Laurie

4/5 Digger/Winnestaffer, Brian

5/1 Pepperoni/Hess, Tamara

6/3 Gonzo/Peabody, Will

/2 Push Flirt's Button/Wilson, Shirley  
Major/Cook, Regina

#### Novice Lightweight

1/1 Merrylegs/Luther, Cindy

2/3 Siracco/Edens, Joan

3/2 Demi/Mailly, Sarah

4/4 Ephrata Cash/Seppi, Zoe

#### Novice Junior

1/2 Hjelma/Carney, Amelia

2/1 Dean/Hogan, Darby

3/3 Sunny/Carney, Feona

## Additional Awards

### High Point Awards

#### High Point Open Team

Army's Cache of Class &  
Kristin Wilson

#### High Point Novice Team

Stony &  
Ivana Haverlikova

#### High Point CP Team

Jasmine's Magic &  
Colleen Fisk

#### High Point First Time Rider

Brian Winnestaffer

#### High Point Junior Rider

Kristin Wilson

### Breed Awards

#### High Point Arabian

HMU First Danse &  
Jaida Vroman

#### High Point Morgan

NWMF Melody &  
Dorothy Hrncir

#### High Point Paint

Wild Lady's Nite &  
Susan Dent

#### High Point Half-Arabian

Willow Bey Star &  
Brenda Grogan

#### High Point Gaited Horse

Tinni &  
Pete Praetorius

#### High Point Quarter Horse

Alaskas Cocoa King &  
Sandra O'Brien



# *A Salute To The BMBB Volunteers!*

*It takes an army!!*



Lisa Kelly photo

Ride Manage/Trail Master Katie Carney



Lisa Kelly photo

Point riders Stefanie Bergman and Julia Schirack



Deanna Quinn photo

P & R crew members having fun on the mountain



Deanna Quinn photo

Helper extraordinaire Chase Quinn



Lisa Kelly photo

Hard-working P & R crew



Lisa Kelly photo

Another hard-working P & R crew



Chase Quinn photo

P & R Crew group photo



Lisa Kelly photo

Safety riders Keith Bentti and Patty Duncan



Lisa Kelly photo

Judges' secretaries observe as Vet Judge Kay Gunckel checks a rider's horse



*And then there  
were the Riders...*



**Sarah Gotschall**



**Deb Moore**



**Melissa Onorati**



**Donna Forrester**



**Feona and Amelia Carney**



**Autumn Bentz**



**Mallori Allen**



**Kelly Stevenson and Ashlyn Kirk**



**Jaida Vroman (69) and  
Francine Long (70)**



*There were  
rivers to cross...*



Autumn Bentz



Sandra O'Brien



Sandra O'Brien fords the river  
as the safety riders watch.



Elyssa Barkman and Susan Dent

*...and mountains  
to climb.*



Melissa Onorati

A group  
of riders  
wends their  
way up  
Bald  
Mountain



*There were  
judges...*

Karel Waugh,  
Horsemanship  
Judge



Kay Gunckel,  
Veterinary Judge



# *...and P & R stops.*





*There were camps  
to visit, views to enjoy,  
instructions to listen to,  
trails to ride, and  
a good time was  
had by all!*



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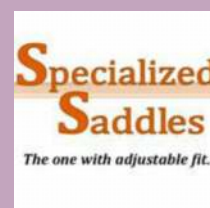
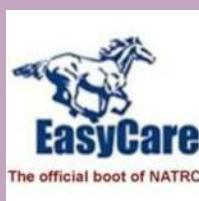
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# Conditioning Through the Seasons

## Fall & Winter

By **Samantha Steelman, PhD**

Reprinted from The Horse, November 2011 TheHorse.com

Fall can bring a welcome relief from blistering heat, but as winter approaches, with freezing temperatures and shortened daylight hours, riding can become a challenge. In many parts of the country, bitter cold and drifting snow can ruin even the most determined rider's plan. While you can't control the weather, with a little knowledge and planning, the colder months can be a safe and productive time for you and your horse.

The challenges of fall and winter will, of course, vary greatly depending on where you live. In parts of Texas, for instance, winter consists of a few weeks of rain and 50°F temperatures. Similarly, riders in many Southern states might look forward to winter as the "good" time of year to ride, when the likelihood of heat stroke and sunburn wanes. Riders in other parts of the country, however, face a variety of adverse conditions in the form of sub-freezing temperatures, gusting winds, extreme dryness or humidity, freezing rain, and snow. Much of the challenge for riders during these months is simply to stay warm and prevent frostbite.

Horses, on the other hand, are fairly well-equipped to handle the cold. Problems can arise, though, when we ask our horses to perform strenuous activities under these circumstances. In the following sections we'll discuss how cold weather riding conditions affect your horse's body and what you can do to keep him healthy and performing at his best all season long.

### How Your horse Handles Cold

As with any other management or training change, your horse's body needs time to adjust to cold weather. While these physiologic adaptations aren't as extensive as those seen with warm weather riding, it's still important to give him about two weeks to get used to his new working environment (i.e., if the temperatures have dropped abruptly or you've relocated to a colder climate). Just as importantly, there are limits to the ways in which your horse can compensate for the cold; this means that you'll have to adjust your workouts to accommodate his needs.

**Muscles** Cold weather, especially when it's extreme, can decrease not only skin temperature but also muscle temperature. Numerous studies involving human

athletes have revealed that this decrease in muscle temperature can have a detrimental effect on performance for a number of reasons. For example, the contractile structures within the muscle fibers (which are responsible for muscle movement) don't cycle as quickly when it's cold. Nerves supplying the muscle also don't fire as rapidly, and blood flow to resting muscle decreases to minimize heat loss (blood flow is concentrated in the body's core to keep the vital organs warm). In addition, cold muscles are stiffer biomechanically than warm muscles. All these factors combined result in reduced human athletic performance. Results from one study in humans conducted in the cold estimated that muscle performance is altered 2–5% for each degree Celsius change in muscle temperature. In fact, the people in this study had to walk briskly for 20 minutes before their muscles even warmed up enough to let them perform at a normal level. Although similar studies have yet to be conducted in horses, it's reasonable to expect that cold temperatures might cause similar reductions in equine performance.

Another important effect of cold is it changes the way groups of muscles work together. Every time a muscle contracts, there is also a small contraction of an antagonist muscle to oppose it; this allows a very fine level of control and lets us make precise movements that are appropriate in speed and strength to the task at hand. When muscles are cold, antagonist muscles might be activated more, and this decreases the net amount of movement and changes the way an exercising horse moves.

As an example, in one study applying cold water up to the knees of human athletes prior to each performing a jump changed the kinematics (or the way that the body moves as a whole) of their jumps. This resulted in decreased shock absorption upon landing. Although these are the results of only one human study, they are important because they suggest that cold muscles might change the kinematics of jumping horses, too.

This could be one more reason why horses (especially jumpers) that are not properly warmed up are more prone to injury.

**Bones and Joints** How chilly weather affects your horse's movement depends partially on changes in muscle contraction and partially on these temperatures' direct impact on the joints. Cold temperatures increase viscosity (thickness) of synovial fluid, making joints feel stiff to the horse. Synovial fluid is thixotropic, meaning that it becomes less viscous when agitated. Thus, joints need to "warm up" before a workout just like muscles do, particularly when it's cold outside.

**Cardiovascular System** When exercising in the heat, one of the primary challenges is to maintain enough blood flow to exercising muscles and the skin so they can help dissipate heat. Training in the cold, on the other hand, causes vasoconstriction in the skin that diverts more blood flow to working muscle. For this reason, horses can often exercise at lower heart rates in cooler temperatures than they can in the heat; in such instances the cold weather actually works in your favor. Just be aware that this decreased blood flow to the skin increases the risk of frostbite, especially if you're riding with a significant wind chill. Fortunately, healthy adult horses are fairly



*Horses' bodies are uniquely designed to compensate for the cold, but you still must adjust your workouts to accommodate their muscles, joints, and respiratory and cardiovascular systems' specialized needs.*

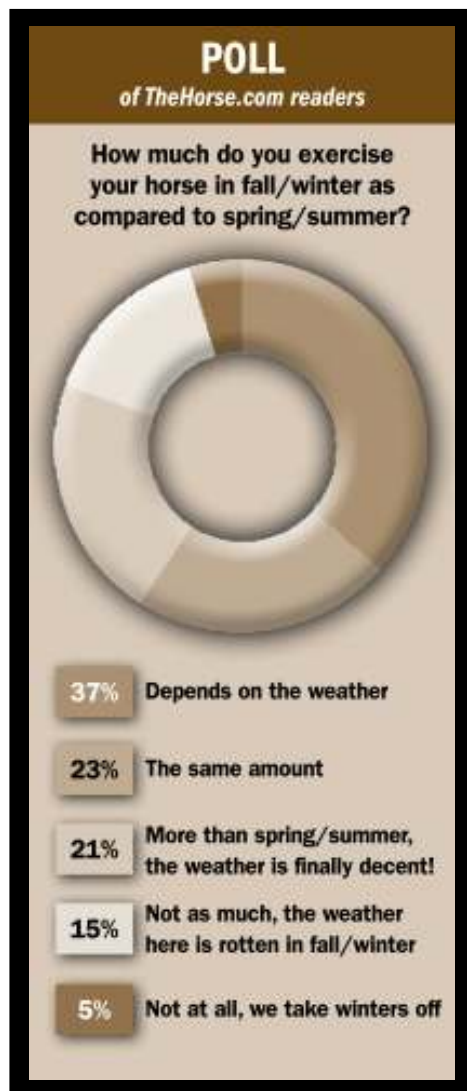
resistant to frostbite, although riders should be sure to protect their own skin in cold weather. In humans, frostbite of the fingers and toes is prevented by a temporary increase in blood flow every few minutes, which warms the tissue back up. This is improved by exercise training and suggests that the more fit you are, the less likely you might be to get frostbite while riding.

**Respiratory System** In both humans and horses, cold weather workouts might lead to exercise-induced bronchospasm (EIB). In humans this is also called “ski asthma,” and it can cause shortness of breath, coughing, and decreased athletic performance. In certain exercising horses researchers believe the upper airways can’t warm and humidify inhaled air quickly enough to prevent exposing the sensitive lower airways to cold, dry air, which causes tissue damage. Just one bout of exercise while breathing cold air can cause lung inflammation and an increased airway resistance to air flow in healthy horses with no history of breathing problems, according to a series of studies published by Michael S. Davis, DVM, PhD, Dipl. ACVIM, professor and director of the Comparative Exercise Physiology Laboratory at Oklahoma State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine, in 2006 and 2007. Surprisingly, these effects can last up to 48 hours after exercise, which could lead to chronic low-grade inflammation in horses that are exercised regularly in the cold. No conclusive evidence exists, however, demonstrating EIB occurs in horses. But as a preventive measure, try to ride in a well-ventilated indoor arena when possible.

### Keys To Cold Weather Riding

**Warm and Dry** As your mother always said, dressing in layers is the key to staying warm and dry in the winter. Believe it or not, the same is true for your horse. All clipping and blanketing strategies have one goal in common: to keep your horse warm while still allowing his coat to dry quickly after a workout. One strategy is to use a half-sheet or exercise sheet during warm-up and cool-down. This warms the large hip and thigh muscles and aids in the warming process (see the prior section regarding muscles and tendons). Other than the possible addition of an exercise sheet, a winter warm-up shouldn’t differ much from a summer warm-up. A standard recommendation is five minutes each of walking, trotting/jogging, and cantering/loping before really putting your horse to work. After your ride is over, a wool cooler will help keep your horse warm while wicking moisture from his coat. No matter what, your horse should be cool and dry before he is stalled or turned out again.

**Clear the Air** If you have a choice of whether to ride indoors or outdoors, consider not only your comfort but also your



horse’s comfort. Results from a study done at Pennsylvania State University showed that during the winter there are significant differences in air quality between indoor and outdoor riding arenas. The researchers determined that indoor arenas were slightly warmer than outdoor arenas but were also more humid, likely due to the water applied to arena surfaces to reduce dust. Warm and humid air could help alleviate some respiratory problems, but it also promotes the growth of mold and fungus, which can irritate the lungs. Alternatively, dust can be a major problem, particularly in poorly ventilated arenas.

To improve your indoor arena’s air quality, Jenifer Nadeau, MS, PhD, an equine extension specialist at the University of Connecticut, recommends making sure it is well-ventilated rather than closed up tight.

In addition, if you add water to your arena to keep the dust down, water heavily but seldom. A good rule of thumb is to apply water until the footing has been saturated to a depth of two inches. “You can also consider using products such as salts of calcium chloride or magnesium chloride (for

dust control), although both can dry out horse’s hooves,” Nadeau adds.

Good ventilation in the stable area is important as well, since many horses spend more time stabled during colder months. Nadeau suggests turning horses out while their stalls are being cleaned to avoid exposing them to airborne dust and dirt. Also consider ammonia. A quick way to judge air quality in your horse’s living space is to “go into the stall and put your head down to about horse’s nose level,” says Nadeau. “If you smell ammonia, the stall does not have good air quality.”

A “stuffy” feeling might also indicate that the stall needs more ventilation. These problems can often be fixed by opening doors or windows on opposite sides of the barn that allow efficient cross ventilation. “If condensation occurs on surfaces inside the barn, the stable is not being properly ventilated,” Nadeau says.

While it might not seem like it, these small changes can have a large impact on your horse’s comfort, health, and performance.

**Safety First** Although frigid temperatures are the more obvious limitation during this time of year, late fall and the winter present additional potential problems for horses and riders. Shorter days mean fewer daylight hours for riding, which can mean increased danger for equestrians who must ride on public roads to access their favorite trail, arena, or cross-country course. Nadeau suggests wearing a reflective safety vest, carrying a light, and riding at a slow pace if you find yourself on the road after dark. “You can even get a safety vest for the neck (and chest) of your horse to make him visible to traffic,” she says.

Another major concern while riding outdoors during the colder months is the footing. Deep snow, hidden ice, and even frozen mud can cause injuries. “A little slip could mean a long layup, so proper shoeing for winter trail rides and removal of ice balls through the use of ‘snowball pads’ or borium (to prevent slipping) is the best way to prevent injuries,” Nadeau advises. Although it can be frustrating to have to skip a ride, “If it seems dangerous to ride outside, then don’t.”

### Take-home Message

Cold weather presents unique challenges, but with a little knowledge and planning, this time of year can be safe, comfortable, and productive for you and your horse. You mount will also be in better physical condition going into the spring riding and showing season. Be sure to give your horse plenty of time to warm up at the start of exercise, make sure he stays warm and dry, and keep his environment well ventilated. And, as always, use your best judgment when it comes to you and your horse’s safety.



# 10 Tips for Winterizing Your Horse

Whether your region's winter weather consists of cooler temps and occasional rains, or if you're in for months of frigid winds and endless snowfall, you can take steps to make the season more manageable. The Horse has formulated 10 veterinarian-approved tips for keeping your horse healthy and comfortable during the cold season. Check these off your to-do list before the temperatures plunge and the snow arrives.

**1 Blanket Maintenance** If your horse stays in work or competes during the winter, it might be necessary to body clip and blanket him. So dig out your blankets and rugs, make sure they're clean and in good repair, and check that they still fit well to prevent sores and hair loss.



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**2 Assess Body Condition** Going into winter, it's important to evaluate your horse's body condition to determine if he's too fat, too thin, or just right. A healthy layer of fat over your horse's ribs both insulates and provides energy during cold months. Remember that it's easier and cheaper to improve your horse's body condition before mid-winter when you realize he's become thin.

**3 Check His Teeth** If your horse has developed sharp edges or uneven wear patterns on his teeth, he might not be receiving adequate calories to maintain his weight during winter. Have a veterinary dental practitioner evaluate and/or float your horse's teeth in the fall so you're not spending extra money on groceries in an effort to promote weight gain in the midst of (or immediately after) winter.

**4 Adjust Feed** Because horses' nutrient requirements increase with colder temperatures, you might need to adjust your horse's feed rations during this time to ensure he maintains adequate body condition. Routinely evaluate his condition (e.g., feeling over his ribs) and increase forage intake, rather than concentrates, as needed for increased calories. If you plan to ride less during winter, he might require less concentrate feed. Remember, however, to make any feed changes slowly to avoid gastrointestinal upset.

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Feeding a good-quality hay helps reduce colic risk and generate internal heat.



**5 Focus on Forage** Feeding good-quality hay at 1-2.5% of your horse's weight daily is key to sustaining a horse through winter with less risk of colic or weight loss and the added benefit of internal heat generation. Stock up on quality hay early, particularly in areas affected earlier in the year by drought, since supplies might be scarce.

**6 Care for the Coat** If your horse is not competing or going to be in steady work, go ahead and let his hair coat grow and thicken naturally to provide him with nature's intended insulation. However, avoid blanketing these horses with tight-fitting or heavy-duty rugs. These can flatten the hair coat, reducing its insulating effect.

**7 Tend to the Hooves** Horses that will not be in work during winter can benefit from having their shoes pulled, whereas those that still require shoes can benefit from borium studs or nails for additional traction and snow pads for reducing snow and ice accumulation. Before you turn any horse out for the winter, have your farrier give him a good trim.

**8 Promote Hydration** Inadequate water intake is a common cause of impaction colic in winter. Thus, check water heaters during the fall to make sure they're in working order, well-grounded, and that electrical wires are protected with chew-proof material such as PVC pipe. Providing free-choice trace mineralized salt can also encourage your horse to drink throughout winter. If your horse does not use his salt block, consider adding 1 tbsp of table salt to his grain once or twice daily.

**9 Control Parasites** Although parasites might be less prevalent in cold climates during winter, it's still important to maintain a regular deworming plan. Work with your veterinarian to perform a fecal egg count to determine if deworming is needed. Consider administering an ivermectin-type dewormer after the first heavy frost to rid your horse of bot larvae that like to winter in horses' gastrointestinal tract.

**10 Update Vaccinations** Make sure your horse's vaccinations are up-to-date before winter hits, especially if your riding or competition plans involve traveling to indoor events where a number of horses are housed in close quarters. Here horses might be at an increased risk for developing respiratory disease. If you plan to travel, ask your veterinarian if vaccine boosters against infectious diseases such as influenza and rhinopneumonitis are needed.



Check that blankets fit properly to prevent sores and hair loss.

**Don't take your horse's health for granted this winter season—work with your veterinarian and farrier to formulate a wellness, hoof care, and feeding plan that will help ward off cold weather woes and ensure your horse exits the cold months in fine form. 🐾**



# NORTH AMERICAN TRAIL RIDE CONFERENCE

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## MEMBERSHIP FORM - RENEW, JOIN OR PURCHASE ITEMS ONLINE AT [WWW.NATRC.ORG](http://WWW.NATRC.ORG)

Memberships run from January 1-December 31. We offer eight membership plans: four Regular; two Lifetime and two Platinum. The Platinum plans receive all the benefits of the Regular plans plus personal excess liability coverage with a \$1,000,000 policy limit.

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- |  |           |   |
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