

"The Last Season"

There comes a time in the life of every Horse owner when the truth of the reality of the situation cannot be ignored any longer. This usually is very subtle at first in the form of little reminders about how the years have gone by. Your Horse is now coming to the end of its life. This alone is sad and hard to except, now put the time of year into play as well. Winter is coming and your senior Horse requires special attention and more of your time to prepare for the winter months ahead. This could be the last winter season of your Horses life that is a tough situation to except and to prepare for. You can make this cold season more comfortable and much safer for your senior Horse with following just a few protocols and extra chore time tasks.

As Horses mature and reach the last few years of their lives muscle tone becomes an issue. You may notice the ribs and upper hip bones as well as vertebrae along the back of your horse that seems to be "too" exposed. Your first thought is to accelerate the amount of feed that your older Horse gets on a daily basis. Yet after feeding the Horse more feed it seems to have little if any positive effect on putting weight on and making your horse look like it did years earlier in the Horses life. There are certain areas of the Horses body that as the Horse becomes a "senior" Horse the small amount of fat that was there and the muscle tone that was larger is now gone never to return. These sections of the Horses body make your Horse vulnerable to cold weather trouble. If someone is unaware of your Horses advanced age and time of life, they think your Horse is being neglected and starved. When in reality you have been doing all you can with little or no results. Trying to battle time and genetics is tough and rarely is it a battle won by the Horse owner. Yet you do have options and there are some basic things to consider and try.

As Horses mature their ability to chew and break down food becomes less efficient. Switching from a regular type feed to a "senior feed" that is able to be broken down and digested more easily does help. The introduction of "pro-obotics" enhances the gastro-intestinal tracts ability to break down and absorb vitally needed energy and nutrients in the food eaten. Vitamins and minerals in the form of daily amounts as meal time supplements also help in maintaining a balanced metabolism. Making sure your senior Horse is allowed to eat without being rushed, or having its meal taken away by younger more aggressive Horses is key to senior Horse health care. Dental exams and frequent worming enhance the slowly declining Horse to handle the colder season. One of the most important issues is to make sure your Horse drinks a lot of water! Older Horses tend not to drink as much as younger Horses. Water consumption is vital for proper food digestion and liver and kidney function as well. Horses will drink more water in cold wither if the water is not full of ice and so cold as to be uncomfortable to drink. Warm water will help to give your senior Horse a better chance of battling the elements.

Obviously blanketing your senior Horse is one of the best ways to protect your older Horse. Yet you do have to remove the blanket on a regular basis to clean the blanket and also to properly groom your Horses hair and skin. Removing the blanket on warmer sunny days is important so the Horse does not become too warm and loses important electrolytes and nutrients from unnecessary sweating do to being too hot under the blanket. Providing wind breaks or better yet a nice barn is great. Horses can withstand very cold temperatures if they are dry and out of the wind! Food, water, shelter, regular health care it is a combination that cannot be altered or taken for granted in the later years of a Horses life.

Corn, oats, wheat, barley, rice, bran, soy beans, do not help any Horse to generate heat or stay warm! This is one of the worst wives tails and misconceptions in the world of Horses! The eating and digesting of "ROUGHAGE"! The fermentation process that takes place in the gut of a Horse when they eat grass or hay is the only food that can be consumed that enhances the Horses ability to stay warm! Have a conversation with your local feed store about senior feeds. Talk to your veterinarian about dental exams and other senior Horse health care needs. Try to enjoy the memories of years gone by and help your Horse to live out its life with good health and dignity.

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