

"Of All The Things"

I could write about so many things, that are of importance to a horse this time of the year. Everything from horse blankets, barns, frozen water tanks, the list is really endless. Yet the one subject that is of the most importance in my opinion is what a horse should eat to help keep them warm. I have come across so many opinions and ideas over the years about feeding horses in the winter time. Unfortunately just about 99% of those ideas or feeding programs are incorrect! Yes, I did just write "they" all are really very misleading and have no real scientific or nutritional foundation to stand on as a viable feeding program. It is this subject that prevents or I should say keeps Feed Companies from wanting to advertise on my Internet Radio Show "THE WORLD of HORSES".

Corn , Oats , Barley , Bran , Sweet Feeds , Pellets , Cattle Cubes , just about everything that comes in a "feed bag" is not going to help a horse's digestive system to generate any type of "heat" while breaking it down into a digestible matter for nutrients and energy. Vitamins and Minerals are very crucial in a horse's daily diet. Protein is important more in "Junior" horses and "Senior" horses than horses in the prime of their lives. Please remember horses are "Nomads" by nature, traveling 15 to 25 miles in a 24 hour period. Horses sleep 3 to 5 hours a day in small segments, consuming large amounts of native grasses and "ROUGHAGE" as they move about along with drinking their body weight in water over a 14 day period. What in this scenario and description is close to standing around in a small area eating "bagged" feed to stay warm? Well nothing really, yet the reality of owning a horse is not always going to be the perfect environment for the horse. Acknowledging that keeping and caring for a horse is a type of compromise and give and take which makes owning a horse easier, along with providing that horse with a safe environment to live in .Also providing a good balanced diet of vitamins, minerals and appropriate levels of protein with lots of clean water is going to be part of the solution to winter time feeding.

The next part of the puzzle is actually the cornerstone of any horse's daily intake of food. It is the availability and consumption of "ROUGHAGE"! Baled hay, stacked hay, grazing on pastures, this is what any horse needs to thrive and survive. It is the eating of "ROUGHAGE", and the horse's stomach and intestinal tract that generates the "heat" that everyone strives for when feeding a horse in cold weather. The breaking down of "ROUGHAGE" through digestion and the fermentation process is what causes the "heat". It is not a lot of "heat", yet it does provide some comfort in cold temperatures. There is nothing that can replace the benefits that a horse receives from eating grass or hay. There are older horses that have worn down their teeth ,or are missing teeth .There are horses that have natural allergies to native grasses in their area. Some horses just cannot live well on consuming "ROUGHAGE" alone. These situations are very frustrating to horse owners. A lot of the time horse owners receive so much incorrect information; they just give up and resign themselves to having a horse with problems".

Many of the major global Feed Companies have developed "SENIOR FEEDS". These types of bagged feeds are made up of vitamins and minerals along with a base of "ROUGHAGE". These feeds also contain a type of protein that is easily digestible for a horse. You could actually make an argument to feed these types of senior feeds to any horse that is on a maintenance type of diet. These senior feeds are designed to be very easy for a horse with eating disorders to consume and break down into a nutritional meal. This being said, the eating and digesting of "ROUGHAGE" is still the main key in any horse's diet! I do not want you to just take my word for this. Read the feeding instructions on any type of bagged feed for horses. You

will always find in very dramatic fashion that the bagged feed is to be a small part of the horse daily intake of food. "ROUGHAGE" in the form of free grazing on pasture, or the feeding of baled hay is the main ingredient to be fed to the horse. "ROUGHAGE" IS WHAT HORSES NEED TO STAY WARMER IN WINTER !!!!!

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