

## "Cold Weather/Cold Hooves"

Most of the places in this country are into fall with winter just around the corner. With cold winter temperatures and shorter daylight time horses tend to receive less basic hoof care. During holidays busy schedules and doing the winter chores. This makes it harder on people and harder on the horses until spring. A lot of horse owners believe that in cold weather horses hooves just do not grow at all. This is not exactly accurate, the systems and the part of the horses metabolism that grows hoof wall. Is also the same for growing hair, main, and tail. So some horse's bodies slow down hoof growth to provide the horse with a nice thick winter coat of bushy horse hair. Other horses systems are a little less active and provide the horse with a little more hair and still allow for some growth of the foot. Either way you still have some kind of hoof care that is required for the horse to maintain a quality foot.

In the fall and winter months some horse owners just give up and resign themselves that their horse's hooves will be poor until spring. You really have so many options available to you that this is really not even close to the truth! Regular trimming at the horse's hoof growth rate instead of every 6 weeks or so is a great start. Also applying some type of anti-bacterial ointment or liquid to the bottom of the hoof to ward of "seedy toe" and "thrush" is a good health care practice as well. Talking to your veterinarian, along with discussing options with your farrier/horseshoer goes a long ways to preventing winter time trouble. I find most horse owners want to try and do something for their horse's hooves. It is more of not knowing what works or not knowing anything at all. A little prevention and understanding that no matter what, your horses need hoof care even in the worst of winter weather.

Now let's talk about "traction" for your horse. Snow and ice can affect your horse just like it affects you. Shoes on a horse turned out for the winter cause many types of problems for your horse. Such as "snow balling" of mud and snow on the bottom of the horses hoof, this is caused by the shoe helping to keep foreign matter on the sole of the hoof. Actually even without a shoe this can occur which can be just as uncomfortable to walk. The use of any type of "slippery" products such as Pam Cooking Spray, Cooking Oils, Vaseline Petroleum Jelly, Hand Lotions, all work to help the bottom of the foot to not hold onto snow and mud. Try not using motor oils or automotive type greases or sprays. These are very toxic and harmful to the horse's feet. Although a long time ago horse owners did use these types of things still does not make it safe.

Considering doing "something" is so much better for your horse than considering doing "nothing". You have so many options and things you can try to make winter time easier on your horses hoof. It just seems a shame not to investigate and inquire about winter time hoof care. Take care and have an easy and gentle winter.

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