

## IS YOUR HORSE WINTER-READY?

### Winter Colic Prevention Checklist

#### WATER INTAKE

- Ensure fresh, clean water is always available
- Check troughs daily
- Break ice if applicable
- Monitor how much your horse is drinking
- Consider offering tempered water during very cold weather



#### Pro Tip:

Some older horses with dental pain or sore incisors may actively avoid very cold water - consider offering warm water for older horses.

#### DAILY EXERCISE & TURNOUT

- Encourage regular movement
- Maintain exercise where possible
- Avoid prolonged confinement
- Allow turnout when conditions permit



#### Pro Tip:

Movement helps stimulate normal gut motility. Even light turnout during winter makes a meaningful difference.

#### HAY & FEEDING MANAGEMENT

- Ensure adequate forage intake
- Introduce feed changes gradually
- Avoid sudden changes in hay type
- Feed little and often where practical
- Monitor appetite closely



#### Pro Tip:

Hay contains far less moisture than fresh pasture - water intake becomes even more critical when hay feeding increases.

#### DENTAL HEALTH

- Schedule regular dental examinations
- Assess weight and body condition regularly
- Monitor feed dropping and slow eating
- Watch for quidding (dropping partially chewed feed)



#### Watch For:

If your horse is eating less, dropping feed or losing weight, a dental examination may be warranted. Contact us to book.

#### WORM CONTROL

- Follow a strategic parasite management program
- Use faecal egg counts where appropriate
- Remove manure from paddocks regularly
- Avoid unnecessary worming



#### Pro Tip:

Heavy parasite burdens can contribute to digestive disease and increase colic risk.



#### Know the Early Warning Signs - Contact Your Vet If Your Horse Develops:

- Reduced appetite
- Reduced manure output
- Lying down more than usual
- Pawing
- Looking at their flank
- Stretching repeatedly
- Rolling
- Changes in behaviour
- Signs of discomfort

## WHY WINTER INCREASES COLIC RISK

### Understanding the risks - so you can manage them

Many horse owners associate colic with hot weather - but winter brings its own digestive challenges.

#### REDUCED WATER INTAKE

One of the biggest winter risk factors is reduced water consumption. Cold water is less appealing to horses, particularly on frosty mornings. Some simply drink less, increasing their risk of dehydration and impaction colic.

Older horses face an additional challenge - those with painful incisors or dental disease may actively avoid very cold water, further reducing intake. Offering tempered water during cold weather can help.

#### INCREASED HAY FEEDING

As pasture growth slows, horses rely more heavily on hay. Hay is an excellent fibre source, but contains much less moisture than fresh pasture. When increased hay consumption combines with reduced water intake, the risk of impaction colic increases significantly.

#### REDUCED EXERCISE

Movement plays an important role in maintaining normal gut motility. During winter, horses may spend more time confined due to weather, shorter daylight hours or reduced riding schedules. Less movement can mean reduced stimulation of the digestive tract.

### OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

While impaction colic is the most common winter concern, parasite burdens, underlying infections, inflammatory conditions and dental disease can all affect digestive health and may increase the risk of colic-like signs developing.

#### Practical Prevention Tips

- ✓ Ensure clean, fresh water is always available
- ✓ Monitor water consumption where possible
- ✓ Consider tempered water during cold weather
- ✓ Encourage regular movement and turnout
- ✓ Introduce feed changes gradually
- ✓ Maintain regular dental examinations
- ✓ Follow an appropriate parasite management program
- ✓ Monitor manure production and consistency
- ✓ Investigate changes in appetite or behaviour early

#### When to Call Your Vet

- Signs of pain - pawing, rolling, looking at flank
- Reduced or absent manure production
- Reduced appetite or refusing water
- Repeated stretching or unusual posture
- Elevated heart rate or signs of distress
- Any behaviour you consider out of the ordinary

### Prevention is better than an emergency

If you have concerns about your horse's digestive health, water intake or winter management - we're here to help.

