

Pennsylvania Cutting Horse Association

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A WORD FROM OUR SECRETARY

Winter is upon us, bringing a white Christmas for many.

This also means shoveling and frozen buckets and all the rest that comes with it. But it also means skiing and beautiful winter hikes or horseback rides.

As this crazy year comes to an end we can be grateful for all the great shows that we were able to have and for all our wonderful members - their amazing generosity, support and time they give to make this all possible. Wishing everyone a very Happy and Healthy Holiday Season.

Joanne Thayer, Secretary





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2021 Show Schedule

Covid-19 impacted our 2020 season pretty heavily, but we are hopeful for a more “normal” 2021 show season.

We’ll publish the 2021 PCHA show schedule as soon as it is confirmed.

For those who love showing year-round, and can travel, several southern & mid-west states have shows listed on NCHACutting.com for January. Texas’ 2021 Jan to May & November shows are listed already.



MOVING FORWARD

Have you ever said, “Well, moving forward, let’s _____.”

You let go of anything that holds you back. You look to what you want to create next. You focus on progress, a move in a positive direction. Road-blocks are released and all is right in your world once again.

Don’t you love that feeling?

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ONLINE EDUCATION AVAILABLE

Take the opportunity this winter to see videos and read blogs

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IN PERSON 2021 BE UNSTOPPABLE EVENT

Apr 22 - 25, 2021 - Red Cliffs Lodge, Canyonlands of Moab, Utah

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How can you also help [your horse] adapt to the frozen landscape that is now your farm? Dressage Today asked a few professionals to give us their advice when it comes to weathering the winter. Here's what they had to say:

"If I'm cold, my horse must be cold." Not necessarily. Horses [have] a digestive system that generates body heat as well as a natural thermal blanket: their hair coat. As the fall season approaches, a horse's coat increases both in length and density and also has the ability to fluff out in cold weather, trapping a layer of air in the coat, which provides an extra layer of insulation.

Dr. Tim Strathman knows cold. "Horses have a tremendous ability to acclimate to their environment when given the opportunity," he said. "Unfortunately, many of the things people do with show and sport horses interfere with that opportunity to acclimate, such as locking them up in barns, clipping and blanketing, feed routines, etc. All of these things can contribute to potential health issues." ... "Even when they have access to large run-in sheds, more often than not they choose to stand outside, even when it's 20 degrees below zero. That's what they naturally choose as being best for them."

"To blanket or not to blanket"—that is the question. Want to start a firestorm on Internet chat rooms? Ask whether or not you should blanket your horse. While opinions vary widely, the bottom line is to figure out what is best for your horse and his situation.

In the most general sense, several scenarios where blanketing should be considered include: if a horse is body-clipped; isn't acclimated to a cold environment (such as shipped north from a warmer climate); is underweight, unhealthy or a senior and/or if the weather will cause the horse to become wet and no shelter is available. ...

But Strathman emphasized that putting a blanket on a horse with the best of intentions can backfire. "By far the biggest mistake I see people make is not taking their horses' blankets off to look at them," he explained. "It's one thing if they're in a regular training program where the blankets are removed each day for riding. People may mean well, but when they put a blanket on the horse for weeks or even months at a time, yet don't ride that often due to the weather, bad things can happen. I've seen pressure sores from poor-fitting blankets, nasty skin conditions, even marked changes in body weight that go unnoticed because the caretaker doesn't see the horse—they only see the blanket."

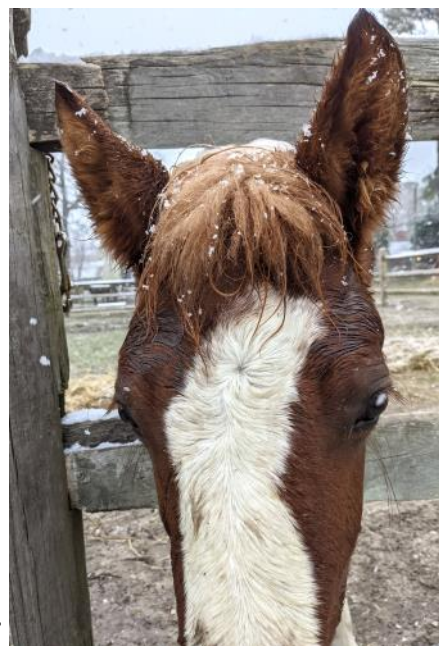
"It's really cold outside—I'd better give my horse an extra scoop of grain." While digestion of food is a primary source of warmth for horses, increased caloric needs don't necessarily mean owners should blindly throw extra grain in the feed tub. "First of all, the amount of food a horse needs in winter depends in part on his housing situation," noted Strathman. "Horses who are left outside in a cold environment will certainly benefit from carrying a little more weight and having more food, primarily in roughage form. One of the biggest mistakes I see people make is simply not providing enough hay when it's cold. But for many show horses kept inside, their environment doesn't change so much, so they don't necessarily need big dietary adjustments for winter." ...

Haydt explained that while hard keepers may benefit from some alfalfa in the diet, most horses do well throughout the winter on a good grass hay, and added that even seemingly dead winter pasture provides some calories. "Generally, I think the best way to adjust for winter feeding is to adjust the amounts of what you are currently feeding in both hay and feed, but not necessarily change feeds," Haydt continued. "But if you are using a ration-balancer-type of feed in the summer and need more calories in the winter, then switching or adding another feed may be necessary."

Haydt also advised that senior horses may have special dietary needs in winter. ... "Fall may be a good time to switch older horses to senior diets especially if you notice them starting to have trouble eating hay, blanketing senior horses in winter to help conserve body heat and expend fewer calories keeping warm may be a good idea."

"I don't think my horse is drinking enough—I'm going to give him a bran mash." Hang on to that feed tub! While the thought of feeding your horse a nice warm bran mash may seem like a great idea, it probably won't help much in actually getting any quantity of water into your horse's gut or have any real nutritional benefits.

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“My horse will drink more if given warm water instead of cold.” Some studies have shown that horses will drink more volume of water if it is a lukewarm temperature versus cold. “It’s all about what they are used to,” said Strathman. “When people have heated waterers in their barns, that’s what horses learn to like. It sounds like a no-brainer, but the single most important factor is don’t let water freeze. Horses must have ready access to ice-free water all the time.”

Strathman cautioned that horse owners may not realize the impact of the transition from summertime nutrition, where a horse will typically have regular access to grass (which has a high percentage of water), to winter’s dry forage-only diet. “This is where I sometimes see people underestimate their horses’ additional need for water consumption because literally everything they eat is now dry and it can cause major problems like impaction colic,” he explained.

But ... utmost caution must be taken with auxiliary heat sources. “It goes without saying that horses and electricity don’t mix well,” Strathman noted. “Heated water buckets are a common sight around barns in winter, but people often don’t do enough to conceal the cord and horses can’t seem to resist chewing on them. Ground-fault circuit interrupter [GFCI] outlets are always a good idea.” (GFCI outlets protect people and animals from electrical shock. For instance, if a horse chews on the cord, hopefully the outlet will trip to stop electricity from flowing before it electrocutes the horse.)

“It’s chilly in here—better close up the barn so the horses stay warm.” While keeping the barn doors and windows wide open may be unbearably drafty in the winter months, closing the barn up tight can be just as miserable for your horse as adequate ventilation and fresh air are critical to his health.

With a barn full of high-performance dressage horses in Dorsten, Germany, U.S. dressage team rider Jennifer Hoffmann noted that one of her bigger challenges in winter is keeping a balance of good airflow and climate control in the stable. “Instead of closing up the barn and having the air get stagnant, I like to keep windows open at night and blanket the horses rather heavily with multiple blankets. This allows us to keep the stable temperature cooler and therefore the air is much better,” she added. “But during the day when we are working, I do tend to close the windows after the stable has been bedded and all sweeping is finished, as it’s more comfortable for people working inside and also to avoid drafts when horses are coming in sweaty from work.”

“Winter’s here—time to either pull my horse’s shoes or break out the borium.” As with most aspects of equine health, making dramatic seasonal changes to your horse’s hoof situation can be more detrimental than helpful.

As the days get colder and the athletic demands for horses often decrease, many owners recognize a time-honored tradition of pulling shoes for the winter. But Central Kentucky farrier Donny Brandenburg noted that this practice isn’t a one-size-fits-all situation. “It all depends on the individual horse,” he said. “If they can be sound and comfortable without shoes for the appropriate level of activity during the winter, it never hurts to give them a break. But some horses may need the support or protection of their regular shoeing regimen regardless of season.”

“Am I doomed to endless rounds in the indoor?” Time to think outside the box. Having lived in Germany from 1989 to 2000 and then again for the last seven years, Hoffmann knows firsthand the challenges of trying to keep her USEF long-listed Grand Prix mounts, Florentinus V and Rubinio NRW, fit and fresh for competition during the wet and cold European winters. One of her secrets is simply braving the elements. [Other options can be helpful, if the area and budget permit, including different footings, quarter sheets, magnetic blanket, a solarium, etc.] In summary, winter horse care is mostly a matter of common sense and good horsemanship. “It’s important to remember to try to treat horses like horses,” Strathman concluded. “Within the limitations of athletic demands, allow them to live a little more naturally if possible, as this can prevent a lot of man-made problems that we unintentionally create.”



The 360-degree pivot on the hind end is the start of what will eventually be your spin, so a correct foundation is extremely important. All major problems in the maneuver, now and later, result from lack of shoulder control. With Essential 3 (the counter-arc circle) and Essential 6 (moving off the leg), you've started to gain control of your horse's shoulder. With this, the final Essential 7, you'll build on that control.

A common mistake at this point is to "go faster wronger." In other words, eagerness to move a pivot into a spin, prompts riders to sacrifice form for speed. Don't do it! Go as slowly as you need in order to maintain control and do it correctly.

In the beginning, think in terms of a 90-degree turn, and then a 180. Build toward the 360 in increments.

There are many different ways of teaching a horse to step his front end around; one tried-and-true method is to walk in your perfect circle, then tighten it down while taking care to keep your horse's nose pointed in the direction of the turn. This is the method I'll teach you.



The goal. Your horse will make his circle smaller and tighter, while keeping his jaw soft and his neck level, with his nose tipped slightly in the direction of movement.

As the circle tightens to a pivot, his outside front leg will cross over the inside one. His hind legs will remain more or less in one place (you needn't worry about either of them being "planted").

You will want to move only as fast as your horse can maintain proper form.

Here's how. Begin by reviewing Essential 2, Walking a Perfect Circle.

Do it in a corner of your arena, so you can use the wall as a visual marker and a physical barrier.

As your horse moves forward with energy, use pressure on the inside rein (to keep his nose tipped to the inside) and with your inside leg in neutral position (to keep the circle round), supporting with your outside rein against your horse's neck as need be to keep the circle symmetric.

Then gradually begin to reduce the size of the circle.

When you're ready to step around, remove the pressure of your inside leg and add a little backward pressure to the outside rein by pulling your hand gently towards your belly button (but not across your horse's neck). Also bump with your outside leg just behind the cinch.

Remember, your inside rein is to indicate the direction of movement and to keep your horse's nose tipped that way—not to pull your horse around. If you mainly pull that inside rein, you'll pull your horse out of alignment. And that backward pressure on the outside rein is to suggest stepping across, and shouldn't be used so much that it pulls your horse's head to the outside, away from the spin or pulls him back to where he's stepping behind or on his inside front foot. You'll probably use your outside leg more than any other aide.

If you keep him aligned with both reins and both legs, you'll be setting the stage for greater speed later.

In the beginning, don't worry about speed at all -- go as slowly as you must in order to keep your horse's body properly aligned, his jaw soft and poll flexed, and his nose correctly tipped.

Be satisfied with just a step or two of the front legs crossing over before moving him back onto a slightly larger circle, re-checking proper form.

Then try again. Any time he begins to lose that proper form, move immediately onto the larger circle, reestablish his form, then try again.

Gradually, over time, ask your horse to add steps one at a time.

If you remain patient and keep showing him how to do it (as opposed to trying to force him), you'll be surprised how quickly he'll be willing to step all the way around.

Use a visual marker (a fence, bushes or other nearby landmarks if you're practicing out on the trail) to keep track of how far around you're going.

Be sure to work equally in both directions, concentrating on getting willing steps in each direction. Your horse will be stepping right around in no time!



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