

Winter Cool Down

What to do with a wet horse in the cold



After a winter workout a 10 – 15 minute walk will not only guard against muscle soreness, it is essential to allow their skin to dry.

One method does not fit all

Your winter workout regime will be different depending on a number of factors including whether your horse is: clipped, blanketed, lives inside or outside, maintaining condition or working on higher intensity training. Your strategy for an unclipped horse living outside may be light workout producing little sweat just to maintain condition over the winter. Whatever your situation; time needs to be budgeted for your winter cool down.



Routine Care

- ✓ After your workout walk the horse on foot or in the saddle until respiration is normal and skin is dry (returning the hair to completely dry is the next challenge).
- ✓ Never return a wet horse to a heavy winter rug. Use a breathable wool or polar fleece cooler to wick moisture away allowing the horse to cool down gradually without catching a chill
- ✓ Clipped horses will cool down faster and a ¼ sheet or cooler during the final walking phase of the workout is recommended.
- ✓ Lighten the intensity of a workout to avoid a lengthy cool down period on days when you know you are pressed for time.
- ✓ Keep the horse in a heated or warmer area until they are dry.
- ✓ Having a wind break outside is good management but it will not save your horse from catching a chill. Always make sure your horse is completely dry before turning them out.
- ✓ Curry the horse to fluff up wet hair and keep the horse well groomed. A clean hair coat is more effective when it comes to insulation.
- ✓ Use of a hair dryer on horses is not recommended - skin is easily burnt and you risk drying out natural oils.

For more information on conditioning horses in all seasons register for Equine Guelph's next [Equine Exercise Physiology](#) online course.