Keep your horse well hydrated – **EXCLUSIVELY WHEN IT IS HOT** – by offering him adequate amounts of clean, fresh water. Restricting water during hot spells can result in dehydration, which slows down recovery from exercise.

**Electrolytes**

Horses require electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, chloride, calcium, magnesium, and phosphate (notably calcium and phosphorus, which are required in equine nutrition). Electrolytes are essential for a horse’s well-being and can help prevent health issues.

Dehydration is a serious condition that can result from insufficient water intake, disease, or other factors. It can cause symptoms such as dry mouth, sunken eye, dry skin and mouth, depression, dullness, fever, weakness, and constipation. Severe dehydration can lead to kidney failure and other health issues if the horse is not quickly rehydrated.

**Lack of electrolytes**

The lack of electrolytes can lead to various health issues, including:

- **Heat stress**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Stressful situations**

**Heat stress in horses**

Heat stress in horses can be an extremely serious situation and may occur during strenuous exercise, stressful situations, or in cases of bouts of diarrhea. The lack of water during hot weather can lead to heat stress, which can result in delayed rehydration, which slows down recovery from exercise.

**Signs of heat stress**

- Increased respiration rate
- Elevated rectal temperature
- High heart rate
- Increased respiratory rate
- Decrease in performance
- Dehydration

**Horse Health Check**

Learn how to perform a skin pinch test to check for dehydration. If the skin pinch test results in a severe prolongation of the skin (pinch, indicating a serious level of dehydration.

**Water needs increase on hot days**

When it gets hot (i.e., ambient temperatures above 85°F/29.4°C), the average horse drinks 22 to 50 litres (5 to 10 gallons) of fresh water per day. Water needs are increased by factors such as:

- Intensive work
- Humid days
- Days with high humidity

**4 WAYS HORSES LOSE HEAT**

Horses wear a coat all year long! During intense exercise, horses can lose up to 15-20 litres per hour in sweat. A working horse’s muscles produce a vast amount of heat – particularly during exercise. Keeping cool takes more effort due to the sheer mass of a horse.

**1. Radiant heat loss**

This involves the loss of heat through direct contact with cooler surfaces.

**2. Convective heat loss**

This occurs when air moves around an animal’s surface, carrying away the heat from the body.

**3. Evaporative heat loss**

The horse’s thermoregulatory system utilizes this major route of heat loss and horses must be able to sweat to cool down. In hot conditions, evaporation becomes the primary method of cooling. If the evaporative surface (the relative humidity) between the air and the sweat coats the hairs and as air flows over it, it pulls the moisture and the heat off the animal in the process of vaporization of water or sweat.

**4. Convection heat loss**

This occurs when air moves around an animal’s surface, carrying away the heat from the body.

**Myth Busters**

**How much cold water can I safely pour on my horse?**

**THE “LEMMING” HYPOTHESIS**

Bathing horses with cold water is a common practice, but recent research shows there is no scientific evidence to support this practice. Cold water can cause a horse to shiver (a reaction to cold water) which increases the horse’s body temperature and blood pressure.

**After work, can I only give my horse seven sips of water right?**

**THE SEVEN SIP GUIDELINE**

The “seven sips” guideline was a common practice but new research shows us better practices. After working, let the horse’s breathing slow down by walking him and then let him drink. Keep him hydrated – ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS HOT – by offering ample drinking water (more often when really hot).

**HOT FACTS**

**WATER REQUIREMENTS**

**Electrolytes**

Electrolytes are essential for a horse’s well-being and can help prevent health issues. Electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, chloride, calcium, magnesium, and phosphate (notably calcium and phosphorus) can help prevent heat stress related issues.

**Myth Busters**

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