

## Avoiding impaction colic by ensuring adequate water intake

Dehydration can be as much of a problem in winter as it is in the summer. Horses need to drink a minimum of 10 to 12 gallons of water a day to stay healthy, no matter what time of year it is. Their requirements increase if they are ridden. Horses that work in the winter continue to sweat, although it may not be as apparent because sweat evaporates quicker in the dry winter air. Many riders stop using electrolytes when cold weather sets in, thus lowering the salt levels in the diet and reducing the thirst response. Additionally, cold or frozen drinking water can decrease overall water consumption. Winter diets tend to contain less moisture, as fresh grass is replaced by dry hay and winter pasture is composed of dormant plant material that contains low moisture levels. The combination of drier feedstuff and inadequate water intake increases a horse's risk of developing impaction colic.

There are 3 easy suggestions you can give your clients to ensure their horses are getting enough water in the winter.

### 1) Provide moist feed when possible:

- Soak hay in room-temperature water prior to feeding (offer soaked hay as long as the hay doesn't turn into haycicles before it is consumed).
- Add warm water and a couple of chopped carrots/apples to your horse's regular grain meal, or introduce a super fiber such as beet pulp into the daily ration, soaking it in warm water before feeding.
- Resist the temptation to feed the occasional wheat bran mash as it causes more harm than good.



### 2) Keep drinking water from getting too cold or freezing:

- The ideal temperature for drinking water is between 45°F and 65°F. In one study, ponies offered hot water (close to 90°F) drank 40% more water than when offered cooler water. (Reference: Kristula, M.A.; McDonnell, S.M. Drinking water temperature affects consumption of water during cold weather in ponies. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 41: 155-160, 1994.)
- Offer warmer water to horses that are older and may have sensitive teeth, are drinking less than normal amounts, or those with a history of impaction.

### 3) Ensure horses are consuming adequate levels of salt:

- Salt stimulates the thirst response and helps keep horses drinking. At rest, a horse should be eating about 2 oz of salt per day. In most cases this requirement can be met by providing free-choice access to a plain white salt block.
- If horses continue to work during the winter, supplement with a well-balanced electrolyte such as ElectrolyteWise<sup>™</sup> to ensure proper hydration and electrolyte replacement.

# When and how to recommend electrolyte replacement in winter weather

Veterinarians frequently recommend ElectrolyteWise during cold weather, when horses:

- Are being transported for any period of time
- Are exposed to an unusually stressful situation
- Are not drinking well enough to maintain a healthy level of hydration
- Exercise strenuously and sweat consistently, even during cool weather
- Have been ill and need electrolyte replacement therapy and rehydration
- Sweat profusely during training or competition
- Work harder or longer than they are normally accustomed to

ElectrolyteWise is scientifically formulated to provide the electrolytes, trace minerals, and B vitamins commonly lost during periods of sweating. ElectrolyteWise stimulates the thirst response, which keeps horses drinking and well hydrated.

## ElectrolyteWise:

- Aids in the maintenance of optimal hydration year-round
- Is a concentrated, low-sugar formula that allows clients to easily adjust the amount offered to meet their horse's specific needs, reducing the risk of over-supplementation
- Provides essential electrolytes in the proper ratios
- Replenishes B vitamins that play a key role in energy metabolism and the production of vital enzymes
- Supports trace mineral levels necessary for effective metabolic and muscle function

### Guidelines for determining workload level

#### Light Work: Visible Sweat

(up to 5 liters sweat loss)

Examples: dressage, western and English pleasure, trail horses, equitation

#### Moderate Work: Dripping Sweat

(5-10 liters sweat loss)

Examples: jumping horses, racehorses, barrel racing, cutting, roping

#### Heavy Work: Dripping Sweat for Extended Periods

(more than 10 liters sweat loss)

Examples: upper level three-day event, western performance horses, polo ponies

| Levels of work | Normal Environment (oz/day) | Hot, Humid Environment (oz/day) |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Rest           | 0                           | 1                               |
| Light Work     | 1                           | 1-2                             |
| Moderate Work  | 2                           | 2-3                             |
| Heavy Work     | 3*                          | 3-4*                            |

*During the cold winter months, ½ to 1 oz of ElectrolyteWise can be supplemented daily to stimulate a horse's thirst response.*

*Always take temperature and humidity levels into consideration when supplementing with an electrolyte. When it is very dry or cold, sweat may evaporate quickly and be less noticeable.*

*\*It is recommended to divide daily doses of 3 to 4 ounces into separate feedings of no more than 2 oz each.*



For more information on ElectrolyteWise, please **email [WiserConcepts@KPPusa.com](mailto:WiserConcepts@KPPusa.com)** or call **800-772-1988**.

Developed by:

