

Cold Weather Care: Horse Blankets

Horses prepare themselves for the cold weather by growing a thick, fluffy coat for extra warmth. Domesticated horses benefit from blanketing during the winter months for several reasons, including:

- S/He's ridden indoors
- S/He's full body or traced clip
- S/He's old or has health issues
- S/He's unable to grow a thick coat

Blanketing the horses means we must pay careful attention to the weather. By doing so, we can help prevent horses from sweating when the weather warms up and also from shivering when the temperature drops. At Troop, we use a layering system of blankets consisting of a sheet, midweight, and heavy blanket. There is a chart by the office indicating the appropriate blanket(s) to use for different temperatures.

- Sheet: Lightest in weight. Most are beige plaid "Baker" brands.
- Midweight: a.k.a "Mids". These are medium weight blankets, thicker than a sheet. These are usually "Baker" blankets also.
- Heavy: Thick, quilted blanket

When the weather gets cooler we use turnout sheets/blankets (a.k.a. "Turnouts") on the horses during their time in the paddock. Turnouts are usually made out of waterproof and durable fabric in order to protect their stable sheets and blankets from getting wet and dirty. Turnout sheets and blankets should be big enough to allow the horses to move freely. Most turnouts have leg straps so as to keep the turnout from slipping and getting tangled. ***Remember to do the leg straps!***

Putting Blankets On:

If your horse is wearing several layers of clothing, put them on one layer at a time, starting with the lightest weight blanket.

- Determine which end is the front and which end is the back
- Place the blanket over your horse's back. You should place it so that it is farther forward than you think it should be
- Buckle the chest straps
- Buckle the belly straps
- Buckle the leg straps (if they have them)

Taking blankets off:

- brush off your horse's blanket with a stiff brush
- unbuckle the leg straps (***Remember to check for leg straps!***)
- unbuckle the belly straps
- unbuckle the chest straps
- hold a piece of blanket near the withers and the middle of the back and slide the blanket off towards you
- fold blanket neatly
- hang the blanket on the horse's blanket rack.