

THIS OLD HORSE
VOLUNTEER
TRAINING

Welcome to our
community of
horse lovers.

Cold weather



THIS OLD
HORSE

MAINTAINING A SAFE BARN

- One of the core values of This Old Horse is that our barn are always clean, safe and welcoming places for humans and horses.
- We are proud of our barns. All efforts and suggestions around these values are deeply appreciated.
- Our whole mission is centered around a base of community support for our programs and we welcome horse lovers—those who have never been around a horse and those who have lifelong experience with horses.
- We are as eager to introduce newcomers to help them learn as we are to welcome experienced horse lovers into our family.
- Experience is gained and the only difference between someone who has never had access to horses and someone who has been blessed with a life with horses is a chance to learn. No one has horse experience if they have not been around horses.

BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS

- Our standards, procedures and protocols are developed based on well-researched and established best practice standards in horse care and handling.
- There are many, many good ways to care for horses and we have found the best way for us, for our horses.
- This does not discount other ways people have learned to work with horses but in order to promote a safe and consistent operation, we expect and insist that everyone adhere to the same set of standards.

COLD WEATHER

- Horses are extremely well adapted to cold weather.
- Their long noses warm the air they breathe, they have no soft tissue below the knee so their legs and feet don't get cold in snow.
- The digestion of forage in their hind gut creates an extremely effective internal 'furnace' that keeps them warm as long as they have hay to eat.
- Most healthy horses will develop a thick hair coat and add a winter fat layer and are very comfortable in very cold weather.
- Horses strongly prefer to be outside with the herd in most weather conditions **as long as there is fresh water and plenty of hay.**

WET AND WINDY WEATHER

- Wet or very windy conditions are hard on horses because their hair coat will mat down if it's wet and lose its insulating effect.
- The barn manager will determine whether or not (and which) horses stay in during extremely wet or windy conditions.
- The barn manager will determine the stall and arena configurations. All horses need access to fresh, clean, unfrozen water and hay no matter where they are.

SHELTER

- Horses will seek shelter to get out of the weather.
- Typically they will move in and out of sheltered areas based on their comfort level
- Some horses will access shelter more often than others.
- Some dominant horses will prevent others from entering a shelter so it is good to have a few options available or larger shelters in larger groups.
- Trees and terrain can also provide adequate shelter.
- Horses will also use the power of the herd and position themselves within a group to create their own natural protection.

BLANKETS

- Horses that do not develop a sufficient winter hair coat or those who have other physical or health conditions to keep warm enough may need to wear blankets when turned out under severe weather conditions.
- Horses who are blanketed need to be checked regularly to make sure they are not sweating or wet under the blanket as that will cause them to get cold.
- Blankets need to be the correct size and weight for the horse. If the blanket is not correctly fitted or correctly put on and adjusted, the horse could get tangled in the straps and become entrapped or injured.
- Staff will determine the correct blanket for the horse and anyone assisting a horse with a blanket will need training before helping.

WET HORSES AND BLANKETING

Wet horses should not be blanketed with heavy blankets but rather should use a fleece 'cooler' sheet that will absorb moisture. Toweling off a wet horse will also help.

Wet horses should not be turned out until they are dry. Wet hair coats will not provide adequate insulation against the cold.

If you are not able to get the horse dry, the horse should stay inside with hay and fresh water until they are dry.

MONITORING CONDITION OF BLANKETING HORSES

Blankets need to be removed daily and the horse checked for any signs of rubbing or skin breakdown.

Horses that are regularly blanketed need to be weighed weekly to assure that the blanket does not mask changes in body condition.

WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

- Lessons and programs are cancelled when the outdoor temperature falls below 15 degrees.

WATER SOURCES

- Horses need a constant supply of fresh, clean water that is neither too hot nor too cold-and they won't eat snow as a substitute.
- **Never leave a hydrant handle in the up position (on) or a faucet on even if the hose valve is closed. It will NOT FREEZE if the hydrant handle is closed. The water will run down the line, below the frost line if the hydrant/ faucet is closed.**
- A tank heater should be placed in the tank if the weather is below freezing. Tank heaters are to be connected to extension cords that are then plugged into outlets in the barn.
- After filling the tanks, roll up the hoses and bring them back into the barn so they don't freeze.
- Remove hoses and manifolds (the "y" part of hydrant with spots for multiple hoses) from the hydrant so they don't freeze.
- If the water pipes inside the barn freeze, contact the barn manager.