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## 6 WAYS TO REDUCE COSTS

During these times of uncertainty and financial instability it's tempting to try and reduce costs by forgoing annual equine exams and treatments. But, veterinarians warn, cutting corners on preventive care can often end up being costlier in the long run.

### 1. Ask a vet to perform an Annual Wellness Exam

During yearly vaccinations a full physical is a good idea as "there are conditions that can show up in those exams that, if not detected, can cost owners money for larger veterinary bills (in the future)," explains Fernando J. Marqués, DVM, Dipl. ACVIM, clinical associate professor and chief of services at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine's Morrie Waud Large Animal Hospital.

During typical annual equine physicals, veterinarians will check the horse's temperature and heart and respiratory rate, and they'll auscultate (listen to using a stethoscope) the heart, lungs and gut. Most physicals also include body condition scoring and an eye exam, and some include sheath cleaning and hoof evaluations, as well.

### 2. Follow Core Vaccine Recommendations

It is recommended that "all horses receive annual core vaccines, including additional risk-based vaccines as needed, based on the horse's living situation, how often he travels, reproduction status, and more; work with a veterinarian to determine which risk-based vaccines individual horses might benefit from." Skimping on these can leave horses open to infection which can be far more costly than the vaccine themselves.

### 3. Have Your Horse's Teeth Checked

For the average horse an annual teeth check is ideal and just ensures the horse can get the most from the diet. Some horses, especially seniors and those with existing oral issues, might warrant more frequent dental exams and treatment.

"Dental exams are important because if a horse does not chew properly, digestion could be altered leading to colic and poor absorption of nutrients," Marqués said. "Also, for example, other conditions such as sinusitis from tooth root infections and abnormal hindgut fermentation can begin in the mouth."

Dental checks are vital as it ensures that the money spent on quality feed and hay is not wasted because the horse can't utilize the nutrients properly. If a horse is being fed large quantities of food to get a good result check that its not perhaps the horse's teeth that need attention.

### 4. Get a Fecal Egg Count

Owners can also reduce routine costs of health care by adding a fecal egg count to equine examinations, which can help eliminate unnecessary deworming treatment costs in some horses, said

Meggan Graves, DVM, an assistant clinical professor of large animal clinical sciences at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine's Institute of Agriculture, in Knoxville.

"A fecal egg count measures the number of parasite eggs, including strongyle eggs, that a horse passes in each gram of manure. A low count—less than 200 to 250 eggs per gram—indicates that a horse has good natural immunity to strongyles and might not need to be dewormed as frequently. Higher egg counts indicate that a horse is a high shedder, likely carrying many adult, egg-laying parasites. Those horses will likely require more frequent deworming" "Depending upon the results of the fecal egg count, the horse may only have to be dewormed every six months," Graves said.

### 5. Work with an Equine Nutritionist

An equine nutritionist can help determine if the horse's diet is appropriate. In some cases, horses receive more grain or concentrate than they need. Ensuring the horse is not overfed (of course, while still ensuring essential nutrients are provided) is a way to save money. Another place owner's can, in some cases, save some money is by eliminating unnecessary supplements, those not recommended by a veterinarian or equine nutritionist for a particular purpose, from their horses' diet.

"Horses that do specific, hard work, show jumpers, for example, may benefit from supplements added to the diet," Marqués said. "But I don't think a horse that is getting a good-quality, balanced diet should necessarily require the addition of a supplement"

### 6. Only buy the amount of hay and feed that you need.

It may be tempting to buy in bulk during these times to take advantage of good pricing on hay and feed, however don't over buy as this could lead to other issues. For example, concentrates have an average shelf life of 6 months, If stored correctly. If not stored correctly, feed can spoil and/or go moldy meaning money is wasted on food that can't be used. Also, during these times of uncertainty, the workload of the horse may be reduced which may result in feeding less per day and/or even needing to change feed unexpectedly, leading once again to feed wastage.

The same applies for hay. The longer hay is stored the more the nutritional value is altered. This means the top-quality hay bought in April may not still hold its value in September, meaning more hay may need to be fed to get the same value out or additional forage support may need to be added to make up for the lost value from the hay.

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Hannah 073 423 5491 | hannah.botha@rclfoods.com OR Helen 083 998 6824 | Helen.Gilfillan@rclfoods.com  
OR Debbie 076 755 5164 | Debbie.Dick@rclfoods.com