



WINTER WATER CONSUMPTION

Colic in horses is always a concern for owners, especially during winter when the risk of impaction colic increases. Impaction colic is essentially constipation where accumulation of dry, hard faecal material in the colon occurs.

Signs of impending impaction colic can include but are not limited to:

- depression,
- reduction in appetite,
- reduced production
- increased dryness of manure.

There are many pre-disposing factors that can contribute to impaction colic's, including poor hay quality, lack of exercise, internal parasites and dental problems, but decreased water consumption is often indicated as the most common predisposing factor. This is especially true in the winter when horses tend to drink less.

In the past a common recommendation was simply to provide warm water however research has shown that this may not be enough.

A series of studies were conducted to determine whether horses would drink more water during cold weather if it was heated.

In the first study, researchers provided one group of horses with water that was near freezing (32-38 degrees Fahrenheit) and the other group with water that was heated (66 degrees Fahrenheit).

What they found was that during cold weather, horses drank 40 percent more water when the water was heated (18°C). But only if that was the only source of water available.

If there was icy water (0-3°C) available as well as warm, they drank almost exclusively from the icy water but drank much less volume wise.



THEIR PERFORMANCE, YOUR SUCCESS

So, the important takeaway from this is that horses will drink more water during cold weather if it is heated but only if it's the sole water source available.

Other interesting findings were that stabled horses fed hay and concentrate feeds will drink within a few minutes after eating concentrates and within an hour after they are given hay, regardless of water temperature. Across all study groups 82 percent of drinking took place within three hours after feeding. So, if buckets are used it's important that they are refilled at or just after feeding.

The average 500kg horse can drink 26-37 litres of water a day, however this amount increases to 40-70 litres should the horse be exercising heavily and/or in hot weather. So, buckets will need to be monitored and changed several times per day.

Here are some additional ideas to keep your horse hydrated this winter:

- Add water to your horse's feeds. Experiment with the amount as some horses will be happy to "drink" their soupy meals and then eat the wet feed after.
- Consider soaking or steaming your horse's hay. Depending on the hay type and maturity steaming can increase water content from 8% to 23%, and soaking from 9% to 17-21% (Earing et al.2013). Steaming does have the advantage of preventing nutrient loss (which can happen during soaking) and also improves hygienic quality of the hay.
- Some horses do this of their own accord, but you may find that dropping some of your horse's feed/hay into his water tub flavours it, encouraging drinking.
- Apple juice may also work to encourage drinking in the winter. If you decide to play around with flavouring

your horse's water, make sure he has flavoured water AND regular water to choose from. This trick also works when traveling and at horse shows.

- Providing Salt each day helps stimulate thirst and thus water consumption, and so it's important to ensure your horse gets enough salt each day. Many people allow free choice salt via the use of a salt block. However, but not all horses use salt blocks well and others can overconsume therefore especially for performance horses its more advisable to include in their feed.

The average 500kg horse should consume about 10g of sodium a day to meet maintenance sodium requirements. Table salt (sodium chloride) is approximately 40% sodium, therefore, you would need to add 25g of table salt (which is roughly 2 tablespoons) each day.

- If your horse is not keen to eat his food with additional salt then you could try using an electrolyte instead, however try and use one that is added to feed and not water as this could put some horses off drinking.
- Always ensure that water is always easily accessible and is fresh and clean.

References:

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TESTIMONIALS

Dear Epol

I wanted to send you pictures of my horse after changing over to Epol Train n Leisure. I had been struggling with maintaining his weight and condition and within just one month I have seen a huge improvement. I am so excited to see the continued changes.

Thank you for a super product.

Adrika Oberholzer

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