

Horse&Rider MONTHLY

JUNE 2022

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CHECKLIST

STAY
HYDRATED
DURING A
TRAINING
SESSION

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FOALS (MINIMUM AGE)	4 Weeks	2 Months	6 Months
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PREGNANT MARES	Yes	No	No
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FLAVORING	Apple	No Flavor	No Flavor
EZE-GRIP™ SYRINGE	Yes	No	No

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Horse Life



TRAIN / HEALTH

Hydrate During Summer Sessions

★ Use these tips to keep your horse hydrated during a sweaty summer training session.



If you aren't sure what kind of electrolytes is best for your horse, ask your vet for advice.

PHOTO BY DEBRALAWRENCE/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

WHEN SUMMERTIME ROLLS AROUND, the sun is blazing, humidity is high, and the temperatures are close to being in the triple digits, it's hard to think about a long training session with your horse. When he's sweating just from standing in his stall or pasture it seems like it would be impossible to keep him hydrated if you actually put him through a workout.

While this can be a difficult task, there are ways you can keep your horse cool and hydrated through a long ride. Here are a few tips to put to use when the weather is extra hot this summer, plus a recipe for a healthy, electrolyte-filled treat.

Take Water Breaks

When your horse starts sweating, that means you need to help him replace the water he's losing. Keep a bucket or water trough in your arena so you can easily stop for quick water breaks. Your horse will be much happier and more attentive during your ride if he's offered a few water breaks throughout your training session.

Keep a clean water bucket or trough in your arena so your horse can take water breaks during a long ride. Photo by Jillian Sinclair

Monitor Water Intake

If you start your ride off with a dehydrated horse, you're setting yourself up for a major problem. Monitor his water intake on a regular basis so you know he is hydrated and ready to work when the time comes. A normal horse of average size will drink 6 to 10 gallons of water per day when he's not working. If he's working, he'll need as much as five times more. Monitor your horse's

water intake, so you'll know he's drinking enough. To do so, count the swallows. It takes approximately 25 to 30 swallows for your horse to consume one gallon of water.

Give a Post Ride Drink

Voluntary drinking during the early recovery stage after exercise is critical for replacing the water and electrolytes lost through sweat. Discard the notion that allowing your horse to drink his fill will cause him to colic, cramp, or tie up. If your horse cools down before being given water, he might lose the incentive to drink and won't be able to hydrate when he needs to.

Replenish Electrolytes

After a particularly long and sweaty training session, it's a good idea to replenish your horse's electrolytes. This is similar to when you drink a sports drink with sodium and electrolytes after a hard workout. It will help him rehydrate and recover quickly and avoid any injuries or illness due to dehydration.

Types of Electrolytes:

Paste: A tube of paste electrolytes is great for fast and convenient replacement of electrolytes for your horse. Depending on the brand and your horse's weight, you will give your horse around 15-60 cc of paste before or after your ride.

Powder: Great for buying in bulk, powder electrolytes are also a good choice for replacing your horse's electrolytes. The powder is usually flavored so it can also be used as an incentive to get your horse to drink water. ★

H

HEALTH

Heat Challenges

Summer Health Checklist

SUMMER IS SUPER FOR RIDING,

but it also brings potential health challenges. Here's what you need to know and do to protect your horse.

- **Heat.** Avoid riding in extreme heat, especially combined with high humidity to avoid the risk of heat stroke. If you do ride when it's hot, supply frequent rest/water breaks, and consider splashing water over your horse's chest and flanks.

- **Sun, shade.** Make sure your horse's living area has shelter from the sun. Provide as much ventilation in your barn as possible (fans help). Apply sun block to your horse's pink-skin areas, especially around the face. Consider UV-blocking fly masks and sheets for extra protection.

- **Hydration.** Your average 1,000-pound horse may drink as much as 10 gallons of water a day. Exercise can increase consumption to 20 or more gallons. A sweating horse loses both water and electrolytes; these must be replaced to avoid dehydration and other maladies. Keep water containers clean and water as fresh as possible. Provide free-choice plain white salt in a block or granules (also give replacement electrolytes if your vet recommends them). To check for hydration, pinch the skin on your horse's neck or shoulder between your thumb and index finger, then let go; the skin should snap back immediately. (The longer it remains "tented," the more indication of dehydration.)

- **Condition.** A well-conditioned horse can cool himself easier than an out-of-shape or obese one can. (Layers of fat trap heat inside the body.) Heavily muscled horses also have a greater challenge dissipating internal heat. Keep your horse fit and avoid overfeeding him, especially on rich concentrates and alfalfa hay that can produce extra heat (check with an equine nutritionist). If your horse is at pasture, make sure he doesn't get too much high-sugar grass, a laminitis risk.

- **Hoof care.** Especially if you live in a dry climate, summertime can zap moisture from your horse's

★ We love riding in the summer, but it can lead to potential health problems. Follow this checklist to know what you need to do to keep your horse healthy.



Keep your horse healthy this summer with this helpful checklist.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER PAULSON

hooves. This leaves them brittle and more vulnerable to concussion, plus more liable to crack, break, or contract. Ask your hoof-care professional about the relative merits of applying moisturizers, ointments, and sealants, and/or providing moist ground near watering areas. Avoid hard-ground concussion by keeping the footing in your riding arena properly maintained and watered.

- **Bugs.** Practice diligent fly control to minimize the risk of disease and the foot-stomping, tail-rubbing misery insects can inflict. Keep manure and garbage picked up, and sweet feeds covered (but not airtight, which can lead to spoilage). Use topical sprays, roll-ons, wipe-ons, and/or spot-ons to repel flying pests. Also consider masks, sheets, and leg coverings for additional protection. Take extra care if your horse is sensitive to the bite of the *Culicoides* midge to minimize the risk of the nasty skin condition sweet itch. (Ask your vet about possible progress on the development of a sweet itch vaccine.) ★



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KEEP YOUR HORSE COOL IN THE SUMMER HEAT

It's getting into the hottest days of summer. Here's a quick heat-stress reference that'll help you know when your horse is overheated—and what to do to help him chill.

PHOTO BY DABY6/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

It's as hot as a tin roof, and you've got a day-long trail ride ahead. How can you tell if your horse gets too hot? Here are six heat-stress signposts you should never ignore, and some tips for cooling your horse quickly.

Heat-Stress Signposts

SIGNPOST 1: Elevated

Respiratory Rate

Why it happens: Hard breathing forces air to flow past vessels in your horse's lungs and airways, which helps cool his blood.

Risky: When your horse's respiratory rate is more than 40 to 50 breaths per minute, and/or he's breathing shallowly, and his breathing doesn't return to normal after two minutes' rest.

SIGNPOST 2: Elevated Heart Rate

Why it happens: A pounding heart transfers blood to your horse's skin surfaces to be cooled by outside air.

Risky: When his heart rate is more than 80 beats per minute, which doesn't start to slow down after two minutes' rest. Find out how to check your horse's heart rate.

Knowing how to check your horse's heart rate is something all horse owners should know how to do.

SIGNPOST 3: Profuse Sweating

Why it happens: Evaporation of sweat from your horse's skin helps him cool down.

Risky: When he's sweating over his entire body or worse, he stops sweating entirely.

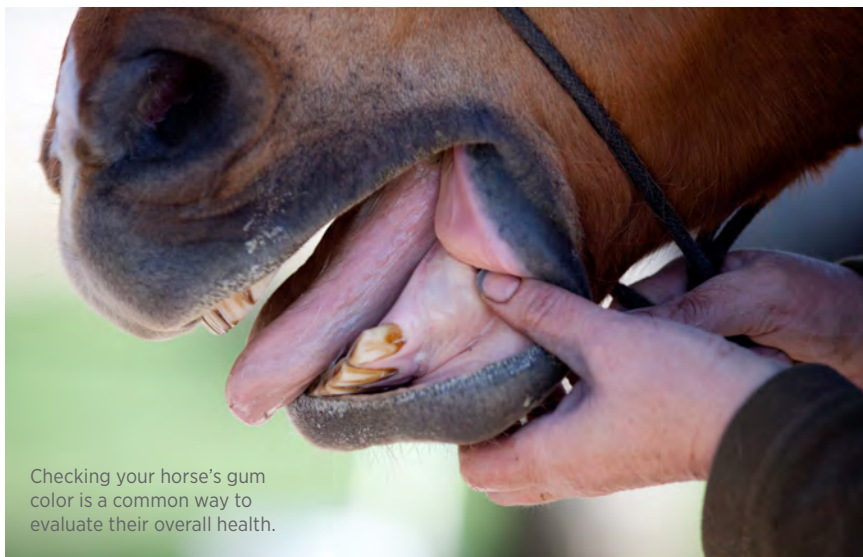
SIGNPOST 4: Elevated Temperature

Why it happens: Your horse's cooling mechanisms have been overwhelmed

Risky: When his rectal temperature goes up to 105 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Find out how to check your horse's temperature.

SIGNPOST 5: Lethargy

Why it happens: Blood is being transferred away from your horse's vital



Checking your horse's gum color is a common way to evaluate their overall health.

PHOTO BY ANJALULI/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

organs to his skin surfaces for cooling, leading to severe heat stress.

Risky: When he shows signs of becoming depressed or lethargic, isn't interested in food, or begins to stumble or collapse.

SIGNPOST 6: Discolored

Mucous Membranes

Why it happens: As your horse's circulatory system becomes overwhelmed by trying to cool itself, blood may pool in his gums.

Risky: If his gums become dark red or "muddy" colored.

To Treat Heat Stress

1. Stop your workout. Dismount and prevent your horse from producing even more heat as he exercises. If he's tacked up, remove your saddle to allow cooling air to flow over more of his body.

2. Give him a cold water bath. Douse your horse's entire body in very cold water. (Don't worry, he won't "cramp" or "tie-up.") Another option is to sponge-bathe him in an alcohol/water solution, mixed in a 1:1 ratio; he'll cool down as the alcohol evaporates.

3. Offer water. Offer your horse cold water to drink, allowing him to have as much as he wants.

4. Find shade. Move your horse to a shaded area, away from direct sunlight

that will heat him even more.

5. Provide a breeze. Turn a fan on your horse, or put him in a breezy location.

6. Call your vet. If your horse's signs (see above) don't improve in 10 minutes—or if they worsen—call your vet. Heat stress can be serious and even life-threatening.

To Prevent Heat Stress

1. Ride early in the day.

2. Use less tack. Minimize saddle pads and leg boots, and avoid blanketing him in the trailer.

3. Provide fresh, cool water at all times.

4. Provide electrolytes. Add electrolytes to your horse's water when you know he'll be working hard in the heat. Begin a few days ahead of time—electrolytes leach water from his system, and he'll need time to adjust his water intake to compensate. Offer him non-supplemented water as well, since he might not like the taste of electrolytes.

5. Keep him fit. An overweight horse requires more energy to move around, so he'll produce more heat. Also, his layers of fat make it harder for his blood to make it to the surface for cooling.

6. Pay attention. Learn to recognize the signposts above and take steps before it's too late. ★



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COOL-DOWN STRATEGIES

Take our quiz to find out how much you really know about effective cool-down strategies for your horse—then read on for the science behind each technique.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER PAULSON

Horse people offer all kinds of advice about how to cool down an overheated horse. And much of that advice is steeped in centuries of tradition that's hard to break. But science tells us that many of those traditions simply aren't correct.

Here, I'll give you a short quiz to see how your own cool-down routines stack up against solid research. Then I'll explain the science behind each current recommendation. You might be surprised by what you discover.

COOL-DOWN QUIZ

Take this quiz to test your cool-down knowledge, then see the answers on page 70 to see how you fared.

QUESTION #1: When your horse is hot and sweaty, he'll need hosing down. What's the safest approach?

- (a) Wait until he dries, then hose him down to remove the crusty, dried-on sweat.
- (b) Hose him down, but use warm water or he'll get muscle cramps.
- (c) Hose him down with the coldest water you can find, then scrape it away and hose him again.
- (d) Hose him down with cold water, but don't scrape it away; the water will cool him as he dries.

QUESTION #2: Your hot horse is likely thirsty. How should you provide water?

- (a) Let him drink as much water as he wants to.
- (b) Don't let him drink at all until he's cool—if he drinks too much cold water, he might colic or founder.
- (c) It's OK to let him drink, but make sure the water is warm so he won't colic.
- (d) The temperature of the water doesn't really matter, but it's important to restrict your horse to drinking small amounts at a time. If he drinks too much, too fast, his stomach can rupture.

QUESTION #3: Knowing which type of blanket, sheet, or cooler to use in different circumstances is an important part of horse care. What should you do when your horse is sweaty and hot?

- (a) Apply a wool or polar-fleece cooler to help prevent him from getting muscle cramps if he cools down too quickly.
- (b) Outfit him in an anti-sweat sheet that will help draw out moisture and heat.
- (c) Leave him naked so sweat can evaporate and heat can dissipate.
- (d) Soak towels in cold water and lay them over sweaty areas, such as his neck and the area under the saddle. The moisture will help him cool.

QUESTION #4: When your horse sweats, he loses important electrolytes, which can compromise his ability to cool himself down. How should you counteract this loss?

- (a) Administer a tube of electrolyte paste *before* a hot-day workout. That way, the electrolytes will already be in his system when he needs them.
- (b) Put electrolytes in the water you offer after a workout. He'll be thirsty when he's hot, so he'll take in electrolytes and replenish the fluids he needs at the same time.
- (c) He shouldn't really need added electrolytes as long as he's fed a balanced ration and has access to salt—but if he's working in hotter conditions than he's used to, you can add electrolytes to his grain.
- (d) Administer a tube of electrolyte paste after his workout so the minerals will be immediately available when he needs them—and he won't be able to turn them down.

QUESTION #5: If your horse is really overheated, he could be at serious risk. Extreme overheating can even be fatal. When should you call your veterinarian?

- (a) If your horse's temperature is over

COOLING MECHANISMS

Here are the underlying mechanisms your horse uses to cool himself down. By knowing how they work, you'll have a better understanding of current cooling recommendations.

Convection: Heat (thermal energy) is carried away from your horse's body as air flows over his skin, as in response to a cool breeze or fan.

Radiation: Heat is lost into the environment because of a difference in temperature between your horse's body and the surrounding air.

Evaporation: Heat is lost when a liquid (sweat) is converted into a vapor.

Conduction: Your horse's warm body comes into contact with something cooler, such as a spray of cold water or an ice bag. The heat then conducts (transfers) to the cooler object.

So how do these mechanisms work? Here's what happens in your horse's body that allows heat to transfer from his core to the surface of his skin, where it's then lost to the environment:

1. Your horse's heart rate increases and tiny blood vessels in his skin and lining of his respiratory tract enlarge. This process improves blood flow to the surface of his skin to aid heat loss via radiation, conduction, and convection.

2. Your horse might start to breathe more rapidly or "pant," allowing increased amounts of cooler outside air to pass by the blood vessels in his respiratory system. This process allows for heat loss through convection and radiation.

3. Your horse begins to sweat. Sweating allows for heat loss through evaporation and is your horse's most important cooling mechanism.

103 degrees Fahrenheit and doesn't decrease even after 20 minutes of cool-down efforts. (Normal body temperature is between 99 and 101 degrees Fahrenheit.)

(b) If his respiratory rate is higher than 30 breaths per minute and heart rate is higher than 60 beats per minute, with no sign of slowing down even after 20 minutes of cool-down efforts.

(c) If he's reluctant to move or shows signs of collapse.

(d) All of the above.

COOL-DOWN SCIENCE

How did you do? Did any of these answers surprise you? If so, you're not alone. Times have changed when it comes to proper strategies for safely cooling down an overheated horse. Here are the scientific explanations behind the answers to our quiz. (See the sidebar on page 71 for the underlying mechanisms your horse uses to cool himself down.)

QUESTION #1: When your horse is hot and sweaty, he'll need hosing down. What's the safest approach?

Answer: Hose him down with the coldest water you can find, then scrape it away, and hose him again.

Explanation: First, know that scientific studies have completely debunked the idea that bathing your horse in cold water will cause muscle cramps. The same studies demonstrated that colder water led to a faster cool-down. All that means is that bathing your horse with the coldest water available is not only safe but also the most effective way to cool him down. Ice water is even better!

So why scrape? Your horse cools himself by carrying heat from his core to his skin's surface via his blood vessels and respiratory system. When you hose down your horse, the water remaining on his body immediately warms up, acting a little like a "warm blanket" that will prevent

him from cooling further. However, if you scrape off the water and hose him down again, even more heat will be transferred away from his body, helping him to cool.

The best strategy is to hose and scrape repeatedly until the water you scrape away is cold—indicating there's no more excess heat to transfer. As a final step, you can take best advantage of evaporative cooling by spraying or sponging him down with a 50:50 mixture of rubbing alcohol and water. Alcohol evaporates faster than water, which will further aid the cooling process.

(Fun fact: I recently learned a new trick when treating a mare with a fever of 108 degrees Fahrenheit. By administering an "ice water enema," I was able to bring her temperature down to 103 degrees within about 30 minutes—a good example of the efficiency of ice-water cooling!)

QUESTION #2: Your hot horse is likely thirsty. How should you provide water?

Answer: Let him drink as much water as he wants to.

Explanation: It's been definitively demonstrated that drinking cold water won't cause your hot horse to colic or develop laminitis—nor is it possible for his stomach to rupture. Your horse's stomach capacity is three to four gallons, and water that he drinks is immediately passed into his intestine. Plus, it takes approximately 25 swallows to make up a gallon of water, and he has to stop swallowing momentarily to breathe. There's just no chance he can drink enough water fast enough to overfill his stomach.

So why is it important to allow your horse to drink water? When he's hot, he sweats. And when he sweats, he becomes dehydrated. Effective cooling depends on good blood flow through the small vessels in

your horse's skin and the lining of his respiratory tract—meaning he needs to reestablish his hydration as soon after exercise as possible to effectively cool himself. Finally, by allowing him to drink cold rather than tepid or warm water, you'll further help lower his body temperature.

QUESTION #3: Knowing which type of blanket, sheet, or cooler to use in different circumstances is an important part of horse care. What should you do when your horse is sweaty and hot?

Answer: Leave him naked so sweat can evaporate and heat can dissipate.

Explanation: We've already learned that rapid cooling doesn't lead to muscle cramping or tying-up, which makes putting a wool or polar-fleece cooler on your hot horse completely unnecessary. In fact, it's detrimental. Even an anti-sweat sheet or cold towels

will trap warm heat against your horse's body and prevent airflow that can help carry heat away. Your best option is to let your

horse remain completely naked while he cools.

If you plan to work your horse on a very hot day, consider using the smallest saddle pad available, and skip the boots or bandages if you can. Allowing his skin to be exposed to the air is best—especially if there's a breeze. If you think your horse is overheating during exercise, immediately remove *all* tack to allow the air to reach his body surface.

QUESTION #4: When your horse sweats, he loses important electrolytes, which can compromise his ability to cool himself down. How should

'Let him drink as much water as he wants to.'



To stay cool, your horse needs to reestablish his hydration as soon after exercise as possible.

PHOTO BY PIMMIMOM/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

you counteract this loss?

Answer: He shouldn't really need added electrolytes as long as he's fed a balanced ration and has access to salt—but if he's working in hotter conditions than he's used to, you can add electrolytes to his grain.

Explanation: It's true that electrolytes are lost in sweat. However, most horses get adequate electrolytes in their normal ration and don't require additional supplementation. Perhaps the worst thing you can do is administer a tube of electrolytes immediately before he works. By doing so, you'll effectively dehydrate him by drawing fluids out of his bloodstream. If you offer electrolytes in the water you offer after a workout, you might discourage him from drinking, which could also contribute to dehydration or, at best, slow essential

rehydration. (Note: If you do decide to put electrolytes in his regular water supply, be sure to offer plain water, as well.)

If you feel the need to supplement electrolytes because you'll be working your horse in especially hot conditions that he's not accustomed to, it's best to provide them in your horse's ration beginning several days prior to the anticipated hard work in the heat. This way, you'll allow him time to drink enough water to strike a proper fluid/electrolyte balance.

QUESTION #5: If your horse is really overheated, he could be at serious risk. Extreme overheating can even be fatal. When should you call your veterinarian?

Answer: Call your vet immediately if your horse's temperature is over 103

degrees Fahrenheit and doesn't decrease even after 20 minutes of cool-down efforts; if your horse's respiratory rate is higher than 30 breaths per minute and heart rate is higher than 60 beats per minute, with no sign of slowing down even after 20 minutes of cool-down efforts; and/or if your horse is reluctant to move or shows signs of collapse.

Explanation: Never underestimate just how dangerous overheating can be. If your horse is unable to cool down, his physiologic cooling mechanisms go into overdrive. His heart races, his breathing becomes very fast and shallow, and he sweats profusely. Eventually, he becomes dehydrated. In severe cases, blood flow to his vital organs will completely shut down; heat stress, or even life-threatening heat exhaustion, can result. ★