

Horse&Rider

MONTHLY

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Horse Life

★
TRAIN / HEALTH

6 Tips for Winter-Riding Fun

★ Whether you're a winter-riding fan or simply curious to learn more about it, check out our frigid-weather pointers.



Snowy magic! Winter riding is especially enjoyable when you go with friends.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BAR W GUEST RANCH

Are you a fair-weather rider? Or do you love to log saddle time even when the weather is frosty? Here are our essential tips for winter riding fun with your horse.

1. Take it easy.

When the weather's cold and the ground is hard (and perhaps snowy), focus on staying safe and comfortable, and simply enjoying the moment. A quiet walk through a snowy field can be as satisfying as a gallop if you use all your senses to be fully aware of the scents, sounds, and vistas of your ride.

Be aware, too, that riding through snow, especially if it's deep, can be tiring for your horse—another reason to take it easy. And because post-ride cooldowns can be problematic in frigid temps, keeping your horse from working up a big sweat just makes good sense.

Obviously, for safety's sake, never ride over icy or otherwise slippery footing. Also, in snow, stick to areas where you know the lie of the land underneath.

2. Plan to stay warm.

The goal is to be toasty but not to break a sweat, as dampness can lead to a chill. Dress in layers you can add or subtract as needed during your ride. Good gloves are essential; and you'll be happy to have ear warmers under your hat or helmet.

Waterproof, insulated riding boots will help ward off that I-can't-feel-my-toes feeling. (Be sure whatever boot you wear is riding-safe, though, with a decent heel and a tread that won't hang up in the stirrups.) Chaps can be an extra wind-shield for your legs.

For the coldest days, gel-packet hand- and foot-warmers can provide delicious heat for the duration of your ride.

3. Do extra warm-up, cool-down.

Your horse's muscles and tendons require additional time to warm up in frigid temperatures, before you start asking him to struggle through snow.

After your ride, towel-dry any sweat he may've produced (again—ideally, not a lot), and make sure he's fully dry before you turn him out and/or blanket him. (A winter blanket on a damp horse defeats the purpose of blanketing.)

4. Mind the feet.

We already talked about your feet, but if you ride your horse in snow, ask your hoof-care professional about the various ways of increasing traction and avoiding ice balls in his feet.

Options to keep snow and ice from accumulating include special shoes or hoof pads or the application of a nonstick agent (such as bacon grease or a commercial product) to soles.

For added traction, ask about a hard-surfacing material (such as borium) applied to shoes; studs affixed to shoes; the use of horseshoe nails with ribbed heads; or hoof boots with removable studs.

5. Go bareback?

If your horse is comfortable being ridden bareback (and a cold day is NOT the right time to introduce it!), consider going without the saddle, especially for shorter rides. Your horse's heat will help to keep you warm on your walk through the winter wonderland.

6. Be smart.

Wear UV-blocking sunglasses—ideally wraparounds—to protect your eyes from glare and wind. Keep yourself and your horse adequately watered, too, as cold weather can promote dehydration. A small snack, such as a protein or granola bar, can help you stay warm during your ride by revving your metabolism for digestion.

Don't forget to warm the bit before bridling your horse—you want him to enjoy—not dread—your winter outings.

Forewarned is forearmed! ★

Out of (Saddle) Shape

★ Stay In Riding Shape Through The Winter With Tips From Rider-Workout Specialist Kelly Altschwager.

If you maintain overall fitness all year long, it'll make a big difference anytime you take a hiatus from riding. Focus especially on your core and lower body through resistance training, but also keep your muscles supple and pliable through stretching. Here I'll outline some body-resistance exercises that you can use every day in your home or even your barn to improve overall strength and keep yourself fit to ride, even through the winter.

The Core

Core work is crucial; your core is your powerhouse and gives you the stability to move. Your core isn't just your abdominals in the front, but also your back muscles, which protect your spine and provide stability, plus the obliques on either side of your abs. So, don't neglect any part of your core.

A plank is an effective core workout as it engages both your abs and back, and even works your triceps and quads as you stabilize. The starting position is similar to a modified push-up. Start on your knees with your elbows and forearms on the ground and hands clasped to form a tripod. Your elbows should be aligned directly below, and at the same width as, your shoulders. (See "Plank" photo, above.) Engage your core by tightening (not pushing out, but squeezing) your abdominal muscles (no sagging hips or butt in the air). Don't be intimidated by these. Even if you can only hold a plank for 10 to 15 seconds initially, you can add a little bit of time every day. Add two to five seconds each session. It won't be overwhelming, and you'll be surprised at your progress.

As you feel stronger, progress to more difficult versions of the plank. Try raising your knees off the ground, but keeping your arms in the tripod position, until eventually you're able to hold a plank in a complete push-up position (arms straight and hands flat on the ground). (See "Full Plank" photo.)

Lower Body

You can't ride effectively without engaging your lower body, period. Strong quads, hamstrings, and adductors (inside of your legs) allow you to squeeze to remain seated and shift from side to side or forward and back in the saddle to cue. Your glutes allow you to squeeze and roll your hips to signal for a stop or to control speed.

Squats are great because they work your entire lower body, including the major muscles such as the quads, hamstrings, and glutes. Sumo squats are wonderful; their wider stance enhances your range of motion, and allows you to squat deeper, which focuses more attention on the adductor muscles that are essential for riding. Begin with your feet farther than shoulder width apart. (See "Sumo Squat Start" photo.) As you squat down, think about sinking your hips straight down rather than simply "lowering

THE CORE

Plank



Full Plank

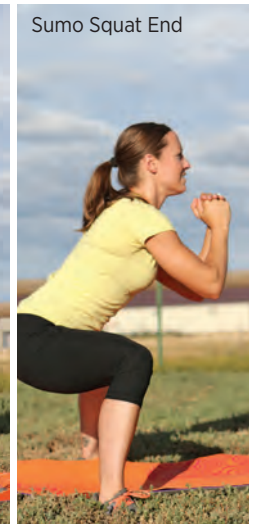


LOWER BODY

Sumo Squat Start



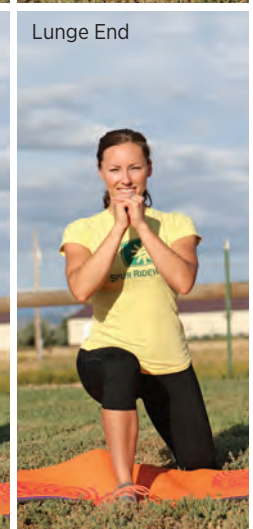
Sumo Squat End



Lunge Start



Lunge End



yourself,” which often causes your torso to inadvertently drop forward. Instead, keep a tight torso, and upright chest throughout the movement. (See “Sumo Squat End” photo.) The sumo squat is a great variation of a common exercise that works and stretches your hamstrings deep into the movement while mimicking the wide-leg position that you have in the saddle.

Lunges work the major muscles of your legs as well as your core as you stabilize. Start with your feet at shoulder width apart. Then, step your lead leg forward and your back leg backward, so that you’re in a lunge start position. (See “Lunge Start” photo.) Again, lower yourself and think about sinking your hips straight down to maintain equal weight and tension in both the front and rear legs. There should be a 90-degree angle in both your lead and rear legs as you reach the bottom of the movement. (See “Lunge End” photo.) Keep your torso upright throughout the movement, and don’t allow your back knee to slam into the ground as you lower yourself. Complete one repetition of the movement by returning to the start position, and then switch legs (your lead leg will now become your rear leg for the next rep). Try modifications such as stepping backward instead of forward, “walking” your lunges (stepping forward into the lunge, then stepping forward with your rear leg to your start position before lunging again with the alternate leg), or stepping to either side to focus more on your glutes and the outer portions of your quads.

Upper Body

It may not seem intuitive, but a strong upper body is crucial to maintain good position while you ride (chest up and open, shoulders back, and torso upright).

Push-ups work your back, biceps, and chest. As with planks, you can scale push-ups (start easier and get more advanced) by completing them on your knees or with your hands elevated (on a fence, for example). Keep your core engaged and tight throughout the movement, and maintain a straight line through your hips and butt (rather than allowing them to rise or sag). (See “Push-Up Position” photo.)

Dips are also effective and easy to incorporate into your routine, because you can complete them on a chair inside or on a tack trunk or hay bale in the barn. Dips work your triceps and your upper chest. Place a chair behind you (or box, fence, or other convenient implement), and grasp with your palms while your fingers grip the edges. (See “Dip Start” photo.) Your knees should be bent, just passed 90-degrees, so that your legs can extend slightly. The majority of your weight should be on your heels, rather than being completely flatfooted. Bend your elbows and allow your hips and butt to sink straight down, until there’s a 90-degree angle through your

elbows and you feel tension into your chest and armpits. (See “Dip End” photo.) Extend your elbows to return to your start position. To make the movement more difficult, elevate your feet on a box or bucket, for example.

What to Do With It

Supersets (several movements done consecutively) and circuits are quick, effective ways to incorporate strength training into a conditioning, cardio-based session. For example, you can complete 10 squats, five push-ups, and a 15-second plank in sets or back-to-back for a period of time (as many sets as you can in 10 minutes, for example). Varied, high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts can provide total-body conditioning using implements around the house or barn to train.

Take it one day at a time. Fitness will take time to develop, but if you stay active throughout the entire off-season, it’ll make your first rides more comfortable, with less soreness, so you can focus on your horse’s conditioning and preparation instead of your own. ★

UPPER BODY



Push-Up Position



Dip Start



Dip End

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* Source: Survey conducted among equine veterinarians who recommended oral joint health supplements. Pellets not actual size. Color may vary.

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LINDE VON KOEDING:

Horse&Rider Trainer of the Year

Linde von Koeding, an NRHA Professional and judge, is *Horse&Rider's* Trainer of the Year, brought to you by Cosequin.

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TRAINER OF THE YEAR

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Early Life

Growing up in the city, Linde always had an innate passion for horses and found her way into the equestrian world, even coming from a non-equestrian family. From her earliest years, she remembers being excited just to see horses.

Linde had challenges getting into the equine world, with limited access to barns and riding opportunities due to constraints in time, finances, and location. Undeterred by these hurdles, she harbored a steadfast determination that, one day, she would pursue her passion for horses.

Her journey took an unexpected turn when, in 2006, she came to the United States from Germany and found herself under the guidance of renowned figures in the world of reining, specifically with Bob Anthony, a Hall of Fame inductee for NRHA. This encounter marked her initiation into the realm of reining, a discipline she had not initially planned on exploring. However, the stars aligned, and her connection to the Anthony's, who happened to be prominent reiners, set her on her path.

A Big Move

She found a passion for reining, and as one opportunity led to another, she found herself deeply immersed in the horse world. Coming to the USA was supposed to be a 3 month venture, and turned into a complete move. Being under 18, Linde couldn't get a work visa, so she traveled back and forth before being able to make the move permanently.

Linde still has ties to the European horse industry. With clients that own horses in Europe, she stays connected to her roots, even traveling back to put on clinics. The reining world is internationally connected, and Linde is a great resource for those who want to connect overseas. More people are flying horses in from Europe, and vice versa, and the international industry keeps growing.

After working with the Anthony's, Linde worked for Mike McEntire in North Carolina. She attributes much of



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her training philosophy to things she learned working with Mike, specifically not to overcomplicate things, especially with young horses. Mike also sparked an interest in judging for Linde, and she believes that foray has made her a better trainer, coach, and even rider.

Training in Scottsdale

Living in Scottsdale has Linde close to many renowned horse trainers, and she has expanded her resume by working with other greats. This includes Casey Deary, and Patrick Flaherty. In 2017 she went out on her own and started training and coaching her own clients. Her training philosophy focuses on being good to her clients, horses, and letting them develop at their own pace. Linde says, "You know you'll never have it all figured out, and there's always something that you can improve on which, when you come home from a horse show, you always want to know

that you can do something better for the next time."

Linde notes that coaching clients vs. training horses requires a different set of skills for each. Her clients love her ability to reach them at their level, and her kindness and support for each person. She works with many non-pros and enjoys seeing the growth within her clients and their horses. Linde's clients appreciate how she celebrates their wins, and puts together practical plans to help them improve in areas that need support. Linde also has a passion for helping everyone have a place in the horse show industry. She has been instrumental in creating a para-reining event that is inclusive to para-equestrians that are passionate about reining.

The Young Horses

Linde's main passion when it comes to training is working with young horses. She loves putting the foundation on a →

young horse, and watching how quickly they progress. She is also passionate about making solid horses that anyone can win on, including her non-pro clients. Her priority when training horses is making a solid citizen.

When it comes to being a NRHA judge, Linde believes it's all about perspective. "I think part of it is that when you sit in that chair you see the one view that really matters, right. I mean it's like you sit in the in the stands higher up, you're going to see different things or at a different angle. And that's especially when we have multiple judges. Some people don't understand point spread sometimes because different judges in the arena see different things from different perspectives. But I think mostly by judging I've understood more." She also enjoys being able to help her non-pro clients understand rules, pattern placement, and penalties.

Buying Horses

Helping clients find the perfect horse is another aspect of the industry Linde enjoys. She wants to help her clients find the right horse, and does this by starting with a series of questions. Linde wants to understand the purpose for the horse, the budget, and the clients needs to ensure the horse will fit them. Looking for good-natured horses that will last is at the top of her list, and also pays close attention to the mare side of the lineage.

With big goals for her current young horse that she took to the futurity, and two weanlings on the ground from another special mare, Linde has some breeding plans for special horses in her program. While balancing coaching, training, judging, and her breeding program, Linde has made a name for herself in the reining and horse industry. Her clients love her coaching style, and made it clear on their nominations that Linde most certainly deserves her title of *Horse&Rider's* Trainer of the Year, a program brought to you by Cosequin. ★



Linde is passionate about making solid horses that anyone can win on, including her non-pro clients. Her priority when training horses is making a solid citizen.



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A person wearing a brown cowboy hat and a dark jacket is riding a brown horse through a snowy landscape. The horse is facing away from the camera, and the rider is looking towards a range of snow-covered mountains in the distance. The sky is a mix of light blue and orange, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The ground is covered in a thick layer of snow, and there are some evergreen trees scattered throughout the scene.

RIDE THROUGH WINTER

Our Seasoned Montana Horseman And Tennessee Walking Horse Breeder Shares His Best Winter Tales And Tells You How To Keep Riding Through The Coldest Season

The trail rider who parks his or her horse for the winter misses much. The physical conditioning of both horse and rider suffer, and the rider misses an entire sphere of trail-riding experiences. Here are some random thoughts on horses, riders, and winter riding conditions.

COLD-WEATHER HORSEKEEPING

Basic winter needs of your trail horse are food, water, and shelter. Calories

ever possible to what they call open water, water from springs that tends not to freeze because it emerges from the ground considerably warmer than the water that flows in streams or rivers.

The advantages of water warmed either by Mother Earth or with electric heating elements in frost-free waterers are obvious. Your horse will warm the water to his own body temperature, and considerably fewer calories are expended if the water is 50 degrees Fahrenheit rather than 35 degrees.



PHOTO BY DANIEL/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Water is too easily neglected in winter, yet ultra important.

keep a horse warm, so more are required in winter if your horse is to stay in good condition.

Water is too easily neglected in winter, yet ultra important. For instance, cold conditions in our dry western mountains quickly dehydrate animals (and people). In our part of the West, many horses drink their water from naturally occurring springs and streams. Experienced stockmen gravitate when-

The warmer water will make for a warmer horse and for one that consumes less feed in order to stay in condition. It's quite true that horses will manage in range conditions by eating snow rather than drinking water, but precious calories are consumed warming the snow to body temperature.

Shelter need not be elaborate. Many western horses do perfectly well with only a cottonwood grove for shelter. Dry

cold is easier on horses (and people) than humid cold. A fence or tree line that breaks the wind helps tremendously, and any sort of roof or canopy overhead impedes heat loss by radiation from the horse's body to the clear night sky.

It's hard to beat the three-sided shelter shed, also called a run-in shed. In northern climates, where the sun arcs low in the southern sky during the short days of winter, the open side of the shed should face south if your property allows it. Situated in this fashion, the shed is warmed by the winter sun, but when summer comes and the sun arcs directly overhead, the same shed furnishes shade all day.

I've noticed that this simple principle of passive solar heating seems ignored by many of our newer Montana residents who come from southern climates, where the change in solar angle from winter to summer is less dramatic. I also notice that on cold winter mornings, their horses stand on the south side of the shelter sheds rather than in them!

I don't blanket my horses during Montana winters. Blanketing is used by those who show their horses during winter and wish to keep their horses' coats slick. If you don't show, blanketing is counterproductive. The blanket prevents a growth of winter hair that's far more efficient than any artificial insulation at keeping your horse warm.

A natural winter coat on a horse is also safer in the pasture; even the best-fitting blanket can snag and catch on fences or tree branches.

IF YOU DON'T SHOW, LET IT GROW.

There is, however, one condition under which I make liberal use of full body blankets. If you ride vigorously in cold conditions, your sweaty horse can easily become chilled when he quits exercising. It's good to blanket him while his sweat gradually dries so that his body doesn't cool too rapidly from evaporation.

If you don't have a blanket handy when returning from such a ride, consid-

er just loosening your horse's cinch and leaving him saddled for a bit. The saddle and blanket will prevent some heat loss.

WINTER RIDING

Obviously, the colder the temperature, the warmer our riding apparel must be, but bulky clothes make mounting and riding difficult. If you don heavy pants and shirt, long underwear, and a heavy coat, you might swear that your horse has grown a couple of inches when it's time to mount him.

Fortunately, lots of light synthetics exist, though wool, with its natural ability to stay warm wet, is still hard to beat. A layer system works well and allows removal of outer clothing during late morning when the sun melts the frost on the fence posts.

An old adage states that if your hands are cold you should put on a hat. There's much truth in that, because body heat escapes readily from the top of your head. Any hat helps, but some help a whole lot more than others.

This is a good time to forget about fashion. Yes, horse magazines frequently feature smiling riders in snowy conditions wearing stylish cowboy hats, but one suspects that the photos are often posed with warm pickup trucks idling nearby.

While it's true that a felt cowboy hat will impede heat loss reasonably well, and a pair of ear muffs can protect that vulnerable part of your anatomy, far better are insulated caps and hats designed for skiing, hunting, and other winter activities. I like a simple knit wool "watch cap," though I miss a sun visor when I wear one.

KEEP THOSE FEET WARM

Do you have trouble keeping your feet warm? Riding tends to cramp the feet in the stirrups without encouraging circulation. When your feet start feeling tingly, get off and lead your horse to prevent frostbite.

Traditional cowboy boots are great for riding, but poor for heat retention,

not only because they're just uninsulated leather, but because their shape tends to cramp the toes. Insulated cowboy boots do exist and are worth checking out.

But my formula for warm feet on winter rides has two simple parts: Buy the warmest boots you can get, and install on your saddle a pair of tapaderos that contain oversized stirrups.

Do not ride with bulky, cold-weather boots thrust into your ordinary summer stirrups. To do so is asking for that

They also tend to keep your feet dry when you're riding through tall wet grass or brush laden with wet snow.

AVOIDING A FALL

Opinions vary widely on what sort of shoeing best handles the winter-traction problem. There's no pat answer. If I rode only in deep snow, I'd probably choose to keep my horse barefoot. His traction would be adequate, and his hooves would shed snow buildup readily.



If you opt to go for a winter ride, take special precautions for safety.

worst kind of wreck, catching a foot in the stirrup and getting dragged.

Outfitter-supply catalogs/websites feature large tap/stirrup combinations; you'll find that they provide not only safety, but considerable extra warmth.

But in Montana, winter also means bare, frozen ground and glare ice wherever snow has been packed by vehicles and animals. A freeze-thaw cycle each day also builds up ice as snow melts into water then freezes at night. →

Shoeing for traction was extremely popular in the days when draft horses did much of America's work. The old blacksmith shop on our ranch contains draft-horse shoes with threaded holes for inserts – sharp-pointed, bolt-like attachments that could be screwed into the shoe when winter came.

Today, similar methods are popular. I've tried tungsten carbide inserts that install tightly in holes you drill into the shoe on a drill press. They were very effective.

create a hard bead that penetrates into the ice just far enough to afford traction.

All of these methods work well, but a word of warning is in order. Whenever you create tremendous traction you also increase the likelihood your horse can be injured by the additional strain it puts on feet and legs.

I'm reminded of the football spikes we were forced to wear during my high school days many years ago. So effective were they at preventing slippage, sprained ankles (and worse) were

Tennessee Walking Horse or Missouri Fox Trotter. And never use a high-traction system on an immature horse whose limbs are more vulnerable to damage.

There's one type of surface that will tend to keep me from riding at all. March often brings ground with an inch of mud overlaying frozen ground. There's no shoe in the world that will help this dangerous footing, and bare feet are no better. The shoe doesn't penetrate the mud, and the whole surface slides on top of the underlying frost. It's the worst surface you can ride on.

If you must ride anyway, consider going early in the morning when the night's cold has frozen the top layer. Then, be home by the time the early spring sun melts the surface.

FINDING TRAILS

For most of us, riding options diminish during winter. Mountains are pretty much out in my part of the country, because huge snowdrifts cover the high-altitude trails.

But don't stop riding. Talk to local ranchers or farmers. Some who wouldn't consider allowing an all-terrain vehicle or snowmobile on their property might be open to equestrians, especially if you're willing to sign a release, and pledge that you'll close gates properly and leave your dog at home.

Offer to spend some time helping with chores or building a fence. You just might acquire new friends, along with additional riding opportunities.

As a last resort, consider renting time in a covered arena. Any riding is better than none. Although confining for trail riders and their horses, arenas do allow polishing of various trail-riding skills. Create trail obstacles – tarps lying on the ground, artificial deadfall made from poles – and work on perfecting your horse's neck rein.

Riding during winter will keep you and your horse in trim and all the more ready for that spring day when the trees bud and the grass turns green. ★



PHOTO BY TIM BARNES/STOCK.ADOBE.COM

For most of us, riding options diminish during winter. Mountains are pretty much out in my part of the country, because huge snowdrifts cover the high-altitude trails.

Borium, a mixture of tungsten carbide crystals embedded in a carrier material, can be applied to horseshoes with a torch. Traction is improved tremendously. My own farrier prefers to weld a small bead of hard-surfacing material to each caulk (one on the toe and one on each heel) of a horseshoe to

commonplace whenever a player was blocked from the side. His foot stayed planted and couldn't move with his body. Far less aggressive lugs are used by players today.

Also, don't expect the extreme traction provided by borium or hard-surfacing to improve the gait of your