

# Winter Feeding

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Nutrena®

Winter is frequently a period when owners have less direct contact with their animals. Cold weather and limited hours of daylight, not to mention snow and ice in northern climates, limit the amount of time owners spend in the barn. This is a very important time period for managing horses for several reasons.

It is very easy for animals to lose weight during cold weather, due to increased energy requirements to maintain body temperature. Drinking cold water also requires additional energy to warm the water to body temperature. Feeding the same amount of hay and feed to animals dealing with temperatures far below comfort levels may result in weight loss and loss of body condition. Long winter hair coats can disguise weight loss, particularly in older horses and pregnant mares. This weight loss will become visible when the horses shed out in the spring.

Mares that are due to foal in the spring and are to be bred back again are of

particular concern. If they are due to foal in say April, they need to be on an appropriate diet in December to provide adequate nutrients for the proper growth of the foal in utero. The new Nutrient Requirements of Horses, Sixth Revised Edition, recognized that the nutrient requirements of pregnant mares increase after the 5th month of pregnancy, earlier than previously thought. Also, if they are underweight, below Body Condition Score 6, when they foal, they may be more difficult to rebreed successfully after they foal. Maintaining the desired body condition through the winter is safer and less expensive than trying to achieve weight gain after foaling when the mare is producing milk for the foal.

Young horses also need to be monitored closely during cold weather in order to maintain the desired rate of growth and body condition.

- Provide clean fresh water that is not ice cold. Do NOT assume snow will provide adequate water!
- Provide access to loose salt free choice (ice cold salt blocks are not very inviting!).

- Feed good quality forage at 1-1.75% of body weight. If temperatures drop, adding additional good quality hay helps provide additional calories. Digesting the fiber produces extra heat to maintain body temperature.
- Remember that pasture loses nutrient value after freezing and is less reliable.
- Adjust feeding rate so as to maintain desired body condition.
- If supplemental feed is needed to maintain body condition, the following higher fat products may be considered: XTN, Legacy, Life Design Senior, Life Design Compete, Safe Choice, or Vitality Ultra. The other method would be to add small amounts of a high fat, balanced supplement like Empower.
- Physically check body condition regularly by checking the amount of fat cover over the rib cage, on the neck and around the tail. Horses can lose weight rapidly in the winter!

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Wish List

- dozen carrots

- new blanket

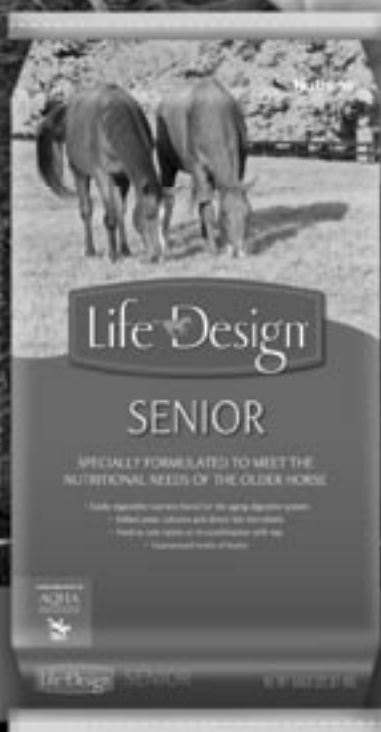
- ~~sugary treats~~

- apples

- shiny shoes

- my favorite

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