

To Blanket Or Not To Blanket: That Is The Question

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Now that the days have become colder, the discussion for many horse owners revolves around whether or not to blanket.

If you allow your horse to grow in its natural winter coat, you may not need a blanket, but blanketing can be useful even with a natural coat.

If you are winter riding, showing, or own an older horse, a blanket is a must.

Winter blankets will keep your horse warm and during the cold winter months, but they will not stop your horse from growing a winter coat.

Blanketing must always go hand in hand with body clipping a horse. You are removing a horse's natural insulation when

> doing so. Body clipping makes it easier for grooming and reduces sweating in the winter.

If nights are going to drop below 40 degrees, use a medium weight turnout blanket. Use them only at night, as the inner lining of sorts will make the blanket too hot for the horse during the day.

These blankets are also waterproof and windproof. These blankets are good for most winter days in this region.

If the temperature drops below 0 degrees, place a polar fleece under blanket on your horse or have a blanket available suitable for colder temperatures. Make sure your blankets have withers protection and a shoulder gusset.

For anyone exercising his or her horse in a cold arena, use a quarter or half sheet until the animal is properly warmed up. Doing so reduces the chance of pulled and torn muscles because the body is unusually cold and is working too quickly. After exercise, place a blanket on the hindquarters to prevent stiffening muscles later.

Stable blankets are important during the winter months if your horse is stalled for long periods. There are good stable blankets available in light, medium, and heavy weights. You will need to watch how the temperature fluctuates in the barn and outside to decide what is best for your blanketing system.

You may have to change blankets when a horse is going out, and when back in the barn. Some

Sign-Up For Livestock Compensation Program Ends Dec. 13

U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced that sign-up for the Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) for cattle, sheep, goats and buffalo producers will end on Dec. 13.

Sign-up began on Oct. 1 for producers with livestock headquarters operations physically located in counties that have received a Secretarial primary disaster designation for drought between Jan. 1, 2001 and Sept.

days, you may not need a blanket on when going out. Again, please understand this is a time-consuming system for your horse, and one blanket is not going to do the trick.

You need to help your horse as much as you can if you choose this system. You will need to invest in several blankets to make it work well for him or her. Nevertheless, if you are willing to do this, it makes it easier to cool and groom your horse.

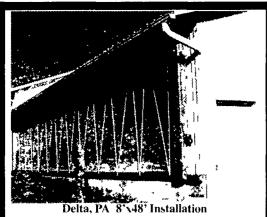
WASHINGTON, D.C. — The 19, 2002. A county that had a Secretarial disaster designation request pending for drought as of Sept. 19 and was subsequently approved as a primary county, is also eligible. Counties named as contiguous counties are not eligible for LCP.

Payments are based on standard feed consumption data for each eligible type of livestock. Types of livestock adjusted by these factors and payment rates

- Beef Cows \$18/head Dairy Cows \$31.50/head
- Stockers \$13.50/head
- Buffalo and Beefalo \$18/

• Goats — \$4.50/head • Sheep — \$4.50/head As of Nov. 20, applications for LCP benefits have been received from and payments issued to more than 310,000 livestock producers in 41 drought impacted

For more information about this program and other drought and weather-related information, visit USDA's Website at http:// www.usda.gov.



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