

## How Your Horse Stays Warm

### Your horse's coat may be smarter than you think!

Because your horse was designed to spend his days roaming outside, he is naturally equipped with tools to keep himself warm when the temperatures start cooling down.

In response to the fading sunlight, your horse's body starts producing a winter coat as the days start getting shorter. They begin to grow a longer, thicker winter coat, shedding the shorter, thinner summer coat. That winter coat has longer, coarser hairs than the summer coat. Thus the winter coat helps your horse stay warm by fluffing the hairs up to trap heat, keeping warm air close to the body and providing insulation from the cold. Frequently, horses in competition might have a full or partial body clip which will affect how their winter coat functions.

Along with using this thick hair coat to stay warm from the outside, your horse also uses calories to keep warm from the inside. A horse's body ferments roughage in the hindgut, which creates heat that helps maintain the core temperature. However, even your horse's full winter coat and normal calorie intake may not be enough to keep them warm all winter, depending on their body's lower critical temperature or LCT.

Your horse's LCT is the lowest temperature at which their core body temperature can be maintained without using additional energy. Once the temperature outside gets below that LCT, the horse's hair coat and normal calorie intake alone aren't enough to keep them warm.

Deciding if and when you should blanket your horse depends on his: coat, living situation, digestive health and age, body condition, and the lowest temperature at which he can keep himself warm.

The decision to blanket your horse should be based on their unique needs (and not just because their owner is cold!).

There are five key factors that play a role in how your horse stays warm.



