

## How to Put on a Horse Blanket

When working around horses one should always be careful and cautious. Horse blankets and sheets can be particularly spooky, especially for young horses or one that might have never been blanketed before.

Below are guidelines to donning and doffing a blanket so you and your horse can stay safe.

Steps to Put On a Horse Blanket	Steps to Take Off a Horse Blanket
1. Place on horse's back and open lengthwise	1. Undo back straps or untuck tail strap
2. Fasten front buckles	2. Undo belly surcingle straps
3. Fasten belly surcingle straps	3. Unbuckle neck cover and fold back over withers (if applicable)
4. Interlace and fasten back straps or tuck tail strap under tail	4. Fold blanket into thirds over the horse's back
5. Fasten neck cover (if applicable)	5. Undo front chest buckles
6. Check that buckles are adjusted correctly	6. Remove blanket from the horse

**Before Starting:** it is best practice to halter them before putting on their blanket. If you have a difficult horse, you might opt to have a friend hold them while you blanket or place the horse in cross-ties. Before you begin, make sure that all buckles and straps on the blanket are unbuckled.

**Step 1:** Start by slowly and gently placing the blanket over your horse's back. Allow the horse to see it when approaching and avoid sneaking up on them. It can be helpful to have the blanket neatly folded into thirds (see below) before you place it over your horse's back. Avoid throwing or heaving the blanket over your horse's back; this is likely to spook them. If they are very unsure, standing next to the horse while holding the blanket and giving them pets or scratches can do wonders to help them relax and feel more confident.

**Step 2:** Once the blanket is on the horse and fully open lengthwise. Secure the blanket's straps, moving from front to back. Ensure the front buckles are tight enough to hold the blanket up on the horse's shoulders, but not too tight that it is restrictive. You should be able to fit a hand between the blanket and the horse's chest. If your blanket has clips, make sure they face inward.

**Step 3:** Fasten the belly surcingle straps. As you reach under your horse, be wary of putting your head in a place where your horse could reach it with a hind foot. To keep yourself in a safe spot, stand perpendicular to the horse, facing their head, then reach under their belly to grab the strap with the arm that's closest to the horse.

If the blanket has two surcingles they will criss-cross - the strap in the front will attach to the clip in the back on the opposite side and the strap in the back will attach to the clip in the front on the opposite side. If there are three surcingles, first attach the middle strap straight across to the middle clip on the opposite side. Then criss-cross the front and back as described above. Once fastened, make sure that the surcingle straps are the correct length for your horse. You should be able to fit about five fingers between your horse's belly and the straps. If the straps are too tight, it can affect the horse's breathing when lying down. If they're too loose, they may entangle a leg while running or stomping.

**Step 4:** Finally, move on to the leg straps or the tail cord.

The leg straps should be tight enough so that the horse can't get a leg caught in them while lying down, yet not so tight that they rub. You should be able to fit a hand between the strap and the horse's thigh.

To apply the leg straps correctly, take the left leg strap, pass it between the hind legs, and fasten it to the left-hand side. Then, take the right leg strap, pass it through the loop made by the left strap, and fasten it to the right-hand side.

If your horse's blanket has a tail strap, it will simply tuck underneath the tail. If adjustable, tighten so that the back of the blanket gently hugs their hindquarters. It should not be so tight that the blanket itself lays under the tail.

**Step 5:** Once the blanket is on, double-check that everything looks correct. All of the straps should be securely fastened and any material should be lying flat against their coat.

## **Steps to Take Off a Horse Blanket**

**Step 1: Repeat the process of putting on a blanket, this time in reverse. Start by unsnapping the back leg straps or untucking the tail cord. Make a practice of re-snapping them to the blanket so that they don't hang down or swing as you finish taking off the blanket.**

**Step 2: Unfasten the surcingles. Once again, be cautious about your body position as you reach under the horse.**

**Step 3: Finish by unbuckling or unsnapping the front closure.**

**Step 4: Fold the blanket in rough thirds before removing it. Start by taking the very back of the blanket and folding it so the edge is about halfway up the back. Fold the blanket up once more. Slowly and gently slide the folded blanket off the horse.**

**Folding the blanket like this serves a number of purposes. The smaller folded blanket is less likely to spook your horse than a larger unfolded blanket. Folding the blanket also makes it easy to hang on a blanket bar, rack, or in a blanket bag. Finally, the folded blanket will be easier to swing over the horse's back the next time you put the blanket back on.**