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When those cold months come rolling around, it's time to start thinking about blanketing your horse.

Everyone you talk to may have a different opinion about blanketing your horse. Some horse owners feel more comfortable knowing that their horse is warm and cozy under a blanket when their horses are outside in the cold weather. Other horse owners feel that the horses have their own blanket made out of their hair and that if the wild horses can withstand the cold weather, so can their horses. But feral and wild horses differ from each other and those wild horses have adapted to different climates and are outside 24/7.

If you are debating on blanketing your horse, here are some questions to answer to help you make a decision.

How well is your horse adapted to the cold? Is he outside 24/7 or does he have a stall?

Is he staying dry? Does your horse have a run-in shelter?

Is your horse clipped or does he have a furry coat?

Does your horse have trouble maintaining weight during the colder months?

Though your horse does have a natural blanket -his hair, he needs protection from the wind, wet weather and the cold. Sometimes horses don't always get a full winter coat like those sturdy easy-keeper horses that some horse owners are lucky to have, and it is beneficial to have a blanket for those horses that do not get as fuzzy.

A healthy horse can withstand temperatures below freezing so long as the weather is sunny and it is not windy. When it is windy, however, the wind separates the horse's hairs, thereby breaking their "heat seal" which results in a great loss of body warmth. Another weather condition to consider would be any rain, sleet or snow that you may get. A wet coat conducts heat away from the horse and wet hair tends to become stuck close to the horse's body, and therefore it becomes hard for the horse to retain its own body heat.

Blanketing your horse if he is outside during the wind, cold and wet weather sure does sound like a good idea and helps your horse to retain heat and stay warm and dry. Therefore, it is important to choose a blanket that is appropriate to how much added protection from the weather that your horse may need. The charts below are guides for what type of sheet or blanket to buy depending on the temperature and the horse's coat type.

Maintaining Current Coat Condition

Warmth of Blanket	Short Coat/Clipped	Medium/Full Coat
Extra Heavyweight	Subzero - 15°F	-----
Heavyweight	15°F - 30°F	Subzero - 15°F
Medium Weight	30°F - 50°F	15°F - 30°F

Sheet

50°F +

30°F +

Improving Current Coat Condition – Promote Shedding

Warmth of Blanket

Short Coat/Clipped

Medium/Full Coat

Extra Heavyweight

Subzero - 20°F

Subzero - 15°F

Heavyweight

20°F - 40°F

15°F - 30°F

Medium Weight

40°F - 60°F

30°F - 45°F

Sheet

60°F +

45°F +

Even though a horse may be "turned out" for the winter, he still needs protection from wind, moisture and cold. Whether you blanket your horse or not depends on many factors including his condition, his activity level, thickness of his coat, level of nutrition, and if he has protection from the outside elements. Choose what best suits your horse's needs and the type of weather at your location.

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