

# features

SEASONAL PREPARATIONS

## Is your horse ready for winter?

Proper shelter is especially important in P.E.I.'s climate

It is that time of year when we prepare for Old Man Winter — storing lawn furniture, covering up plants and putting winter tires on our vehicles. Some enthusiasts love winter and all it has to offer, while others hunker down and ride it out in the comfort of home.

### Animal Talk

Kathleen MacMillan



Preparing our horses for winter is similar. Some horses require more protective housing or insulated winter blankets and others need winter shoes with metal corks that improve traction on slippery surfaces so that they can stay safe in wintry weather conditions. Horses will have different needs depending on their age, body condition, activity level and any health problems that could compromise their welfare.



Horses stand next to their sheds wearing winter blankets on a cold winter day.

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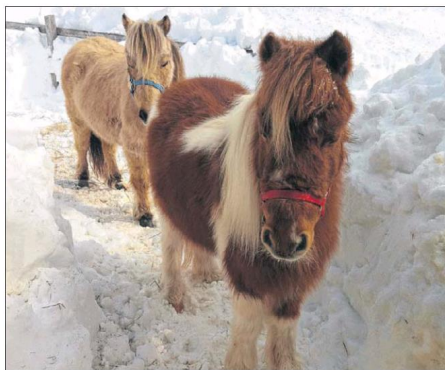
### At a Glance

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines is at <http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/equine>. It contains much practical information and is the standard of care required under the P.E.I. Animal Welfare Act.

Call your veterinarian for a check-up if you have any concerns about your horse being ready for winter.

Winter is especially harsh in the Maritimes and proper shelter is very important given our climate. The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines states: "Horses must have access to shelter (constructed or natural) that protects them from the harmful effects of extreme weather conditions" (Code 2.1.2). Shelter can be in the form of a barn, shed or even a thick wooded area where horses can escape the bone-chilling north wind. I often see horses out in a field during a winter storm with their butt to the wind. The horse may choose not to go into the shelter but the shelter still needs to be there in case!

Geriatric horses (older than 15 years) or horses with a low body condition score (less than a score of 4 out of 9; Code Appendix D) are not as capable of coping with cold temper-



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Miniature horses Monty and Buttercup enjoying the winter weather after their kind owners shovelled out their paddock. They can't get through the deep snow on their own.

atures and may need more protection against the elements. Some will benefit from winter blankets when stabled in the barn or while frolicking in the snow.

Outdoor blankets are essentially weatherproof winter coats that give the horse more protection from the elements.

It is important to make sure that there are sufficient supplies to get your horse through a snowstorm so you don't have to share your storm chips! Having

an adequate supply of hay, grain and bedding is essential, as well as a shovel so that you can make a path to the barn.

Even more important is to ensure that horses have access to water — the most important nutrient.

Heated water troughs are helpful for the outdoors but some barns get so cold that water buckets will freeze and the horse can go a long time without water, putting them at an increased risk for developing

### Happy endings



TONI MILLS/SPECIAL TO THE GUARDIAN

Tallulah was adopted in July. Owner Toni Mills says, "She made herself right at home. She loves looking out the windows and chats to me all the time. She is very curious and affectionate and oh so enthusiastic about all the toys."

colic or abdominal pain. Code 3.1 states: "Horses must have access to safe, palatable and clean water in quantities to maintain health and vigour" and "In extreme weather conditions (cold or hot), special attention must be paid to ensure water availability, access and intake."

Winter can be enjoyable, just take steps to ensure that both you and your horse are ready for it!

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at the Atlantic Veterinary College. Animal Talk appears bi-monthly in The Guardian and is produced by the Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), the goal of which is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals on P.E.I. CAWI includes the P.E.I. Humane Society, SpayAid, Cat Action Team, P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, P.E.I. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, P.E.I. 4-H, and Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at AVC. More information is at [gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI](http://gov.pe.ca/agriculture/CAWI). Readers may send questions related to the well-being of owned and unowned companion animals to [cawipei@gmail.com](mailto:cawipei@gmail.com).

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