

Summer Riding 101: How to keep yourself and your horse safe during riding season

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With summer in full swing, it is the prime time to horseback ride. Here are some helpful tips to combat the woes of summer, whether you are in the show ring, tackling a cross country course, or just hitting trail.

Before the ride:

- **Hydration:** Like in winter weather, you and your horse should be well hydrated, if not more, for warm weather riding. This will help avoid problems such as heat stroke, heat stress and other temperature-related ailments.
- **Nutrition:** Eat energizing food to help you stay more alert as you ride. With rising temperatures, it is easy to become sluggish, especially on an empty stomach, so look for high fiber, high energy snacks. For your horse, give him time to eat beforehand. However, it is not recommended to feed immediately before riding because this will redirect your horse's energy to digestion, which may result in cramping.
- **Gear:** Wear clothing that is light in color and contains fabrics meant for activity, such as Dri-fit, Coolmax, or Airmax technology, which help regulate temperature and moisture. For your horse, make sure the tack is clean and fitted correctly. In hot weather, poorly fitted tack can rub and cause sores.
- **Sun Protection:** Lay on the sunscreen! This will help combat burns, heat rashes and sun poisoning. Apply some sunscreen to the white spots on your horse—he may get burns and sores from the sun. Don't forget fly spray too.
- **Temperature:** Ride in the morning or evening, when it is much cooler outside. Use common sense when riding your horse in extreme temperatures, and give him a break when heat-related issues are a high risk.
- **Safety for Horse and Rider:** Have a cell phone for emergencies, a bottle of water, bandages and a map of the riding location. For your horse, bring a lead rope, hoof pick and some other first-aid needs such as bandages for wounds and a pocketknife.

During the ride:

- **Warm up:** Warming up your horse's muscles will prevent them from overheating and cramping up as quickly.
- **Hydration:** Allow your horse to drink water throughout your exercise or activity if possible. Give him and yourself a break, replenish on water, and then get back to

your activity. You can also let your horse drink, walk around for a few minutes, and repeat until he is done. Either way, giving your horse some time to cool down and hydrate during activities on a hot day never hurts.

- **Fly Repellent:** Flies and gnats can contribute to an annoyed, stressed horse during your ride, so keep the fly repellent handy. Wipes are available for easy travel, along with other methods of fly control.
- **Respect:** Respect property that doesn't belong to you. This is especially important if you are visiting a farm, stable or center for a show/event. When riding on roads or trails, stay on the trails and be aware of farmland as well, and avoid it if possible. If you aren't sure if you are allowed to ride in an area, consider it off-limits.

After the Ride:

- **Cool Down:** Cool down your horse and watch for heavy breathing and excessive sweating.
- **Hydration:** Make sure water is available for your horse. Again, hydration!
- **Bathe:** When you are finished riding, give your horse a sponge or hosing bath with cold water to cool them down and rid them of fly-attracting sweat and dirt.
- **Heat-Related Illness for Horses:** If your horse is sweating profusely and/or breathing hard during or after exercise, reduce your horse's body temperature. Heat stress and illness can occur quickly, so have provisions available such as shade, a fan and cold water. If symptoms don't improve after 5-10 minutes, call your vet immediately.
- **Heat-Related Illness for Riders:** If you are having heat-related symptoms such as overheating, headaches, fatigue, or nausea, immediately dismount and bring your temperature down by placing a cold, wet towel around your neck and on your wrists.
- **Salt/Electrolytes:** Have a salt block available or electrolyte supplements for your horse.
- **Clean up:** Clean your tack and equipment to keep it in good condition and avoid sweat and dirt build-up.
- **Reward:** Had a good ride? If you feel like giving your horse a treat, we recommend [Triple Crown Horse Treats](#). These healthy treats are high in Omega-3 fatty acids, which can reduce inflammation in exercised horses. On a hot day and after a hard workout, nothing is better than a cold, refreshing bath and a treat!

For a safe and enjoyable ride, we hope you find these tips useful. When you properly prepare yourself and your horse before, during and after an activity, even hot, muggy days can be a fun riding adventure!