

Horse Corral

Too Darn Hot: Equine Care during the Summertime Heat

By Alex Valverde, Social Media & Communications Manager for Equine Advocates

There aren't many things horses and humans have in common, but there is one important health-related concern we both share – the threat of heat exhaustion and dehydration. When the sun shines across the fields and the temperature rises, horses need to be monitored and cared for, so they don't overheat.

SWEATING IT OUT

Unlike cats, dogs, or other furry companions, horses sweat all over their bodies. Because of their coat, it can be difficult to see where or how much they are sweating from a distance. As you get closer though, there are ways to check the sweat patterns of a horse to see how it's reacting to the heat.

"They'll have a wet appearance to their coat and they'll be wet to the touch," said Melissa Murray, Equine Care Manager at Equine Advocates. "Some of them will actually be warm to the touch. Oftentimes you'll see the sweat patterns typically on their neck, under the mane, it's on the chest, it's on the hindquarters, underneath the tail." While sweat is a sign to keep an eye on a horse, it's better than noticing a horse is dry on a hot day. A dry coat could be a sign of dehydration.

HEAT EXHAUSTION AND DISTRESS

A way to see if a horse is in heat distress is to do a "pinch test."

"You take the loose skin that's on their neck and you kind of give it a little pinch and you peel it away from their neck muscle and then let go of it," said Murray. "It



should snap right back or very quickly come back down and lay flat on the neck. If it stays pinched out and you're not touching it, they're dehydrated."

At that point, you should call a vet, because the horse will need intravenous, or IV, fluids.

Other signs to look out for are lethargy, difficulty breathing, and a high core body temperature. A normal range for a horse is typically between 98 and 100 degrees, so if the body temperature is above 100 degrees, you should call a vet.

HOW TO COOL DOWN AN EQUINE

There are several ways to keep horses cool during the hotter times of the year and to prevent heat exhaustion. Make sure they have access to plenty of cool water and shade. It's also good to give them access to salt or mineral blocks, since horses lose large amounts of the essential mineral in their sweat. Murray says if you find a horse isn't using the salt block, you can give them electrolytes orally or by adding them as a supplement to their feed.

"It's similar to a powdered Powerade for us, or Gatorade for us," she said. "You can mix it into their grain or you can mix it directly into their water. That way as they drink or when they eat their meal, they get the salt and all the different electrolytes, the

potassium and sodium and all that good stuff that they would need."

You can also sponge down horses with cool water and sweat scrape them afterward, which is wiping off the excess water, and put fans in their stalls.

DAILY HEAT CARE AT EQUINE ADVOCATES

At Equine Advocates, we follow this advice every day there are high temperatures. On these days, our staff will double-check on the sanctuary's 80+ residents during the afternoon. They look for



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signs of heat distress and make sure everyone is drinking water. Staff will also check on the older equines and those who have heaves, or recurrent airway obstruction, a respiratory disorder that affects a horse's breathing rate.

"A lot of times a lot of times the heaves horses tend to have more trouble breathing, especially when the humidity is really high," said Murray.

Murray also says if they have elevated respirations, the sanctuary has access to a nebulizer to give them albuterol, similar to people using an albuterol inhaler for asthma.

Overall, a summertime strategy comes down to adopting the same mindset of heat protection for humans – make sure they drink water and stay cool, so they can enjoy a sunny day with minimal distress. The sanctuary is located at 5212 State Route 66, Chatham, NY. All visitors will need to sign a release form upon arrival. Masks will be required while inside the Welcome Center. As much as we love animals, no pets are permitted to protect our residents. Admission is free, but please consider making a tax-deductible donation. We hope to see you here!

2021 Open Day Schedule – 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 17

Sunday, August 15

Saturday, September 25

Sunday, October 24

Saturday, November 13

www.sonsinianimalshelter.org

Call the shelter at 413-448-9800 for more information

Hey guys, it's Pickles here! I'm a 1 year old Hound/mix.

I've been told I'm a pretty cool dude with the softest ears. I have some anxiety and would prefer to be in a home where someone is often around. I love long walks and feeling the wind in my face and I like hanging out with other dogs. I am a big softy who would love nothing more than an attentive human companion and a big bed to sleep in. I'll look to you as a leader and someone who can help boost my confidence. Let's do this together!



Hi, I'm Penny!

I'm a 3 year old Pit/mix. I've been told that I'm the life of the party. I'm a super social girl and I love everyone I meet. I should go to a home with adults/teens because of my exuberance, energy and strength! I like hikes, playing tag and belly rubs. I would love a home where there is often someone around to give me the attention and love that I seek! Come and meet me, you won't be disappointed!

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Boarding and Daycare remain the same and the food bank is open 7 days a week.