

Old, shoddy shelters unsafe in the snow

PENINSULA HORSEPLAY

Karen Griffiths



pen all the time, and they are just that: Unforeseen occurrences that befall us all.

Hoof trimming

In my last column Dec. 17, I wrote

about hoof trimming and said I was going to write more about horseshoes in this one.

However, with forecasters saying that another bad storm — possibly with snow — is headed toward the North Olympic Peninsula, I've decided to write about horseshoes later.

It's timelier to recall the abundance of seasonal health risks — all of which can be prevented with a little extra effort on the part of the horse owner.

Protection from cold

I know it's tempting to remain snuggled under a cozy blanket and postpone outdoor chores, but this is the time more attention needs to be placed on creating a safe, healthy living environment for the horse.

How? By feeding adequate nutrition, ensuring proper hoof care and providing protection from the cold.

Some of that protection:



Several horses were trapped inside, and a few outside, this barn after four feet of snow slipped off the metal roof. Thankfully none was injured. Caution is advised for all owners, especially those with older or slipshod shelters.

■ Keep gutters clean of debris.

■ Keep water troughs clean and putting stock tank deicers in to prevent the water from freezing.

All animals require access to good drinking water. A lack of water often leads to impaction or colic.

If you lack electricity, then take a bucket of warm water

out to add to the water trough at least two to three times a day.

■ Keep a salt block available to encourage drinking and help with electrolytes.

■ Make sure to feed quality hay or alfalfa.

Hay needs a dry storage area and to be free of mold. Moldy hay causes all sorts of respiratory problems and can

lead to colic or death.

■ Clean and spray frog or inside of hoofs with Pam, Vaseline or some sort of oil daily to prevent snow from balling up in the hoof. This prevents snow impaction from bruising the coffin bone.

Be careful to avoid getting grease on the metal shoes, which would increase slipping and sliding in the snow.

You can also partially fill the sole Equi Pak to help keep out snow, plus it acts a cushion. View product and application method at www.vetec.com.

■ Try to keep stalls and/or run-in shelters as dry and free of snow and ice as possible.

To prevent traumatic injuries such as bruises, sprains and lacerations caused by slipping or falling on ice or slushy snow, keep walkways shoveled, salted or sanded.

I use water softener pellets, which don't seem to harm the hoofs.

Whenever possible, avoid walking your horse over ice or other potentially slippery areas.

■ Be prepared for power outages by having plenty of food for your animals (and yourself), flashlights and batteries and plenty of water on hand — that means keeping your water troughs full, along with any extra buckets you have.

May we all have a safe, warm and healthy winter.

Karen Griffiths' column, Peninsula Horse Play, appears every other Wednesday.

If you have a horse event, clinic or seminar you would like listed, please e-mail Griffiths at horseplay.kbg@olympus.net at least two weeks in advance.

You can also write Griffiths at PDN, P.O. Box 1330, Port Angeles, WA 98362.

AN EARLY MORNING phone call from a reader literally awakened me to the dangers of heavy snowfall collapsing horse shelters.

He related to me how a Joyce resident's shelter collapsed, killing the horse inside — a horrible tragedy that continues to haunt its owner.

The reader asked me to remind people *not* to keep horses in shoddy, cheaply build or old shelters during the snow.

We've received more than the usual amount of snow, and when combined with rain, the roofs are much heavier.

Older or poorly built barns and shelters more susceptible to collapse.

When that's the case, it's wiser to keep a warm, water-proof winter blanket on your horse and keep it outside the shelter.

Heavy snows can also wreak havoc to horses kept inside a solid, well-made made shelter or barn when a large amount of snow falls off the roof at one time.

I've heard of several horses being trapped inside or outside their barns and of an indoor riding arena collapsing this winter.

Also, keep an eye on electrical outlets, sockets and the like.

A few years ago, a local horse died when the barn caught on fire and it had no way to escape.

Accidents can and do hap-