

Cold Weather Challenges for Horses with Osteoarthritis

Winter brings difficulties to horse owners, but it also brings its own set of challenges to horses with osteoarthritis (OA). Plunging temperatures, deep snow and freezing rain are difficult enough for humans and horses to deal with, but did you know that even a change in barometric pressure [may trigger joint discomfort](#)?¹

When a horse suffers from OA, the cartilage, bone and soft tissues in the joint deteriorate. These changes cause pain, deformity, loss of motion and decreased function.²

Hoyt Cheramie, DVM, MS, DACVS, Senior Equine Professional Service Veterinarian, Boehringer Ingelheim, points to these clinical signs to watch out for:²

- Decreased activity or mobility
- Stiffness or decreased movement of joints
- Heat
- Swelling
- Pain
- Lameness

There is no cure for OA, but it is possible to manage signs.^{2,3}

“Our aim is to control the progression of the disease by focusing on alleviating joint pain and inflammation, which allows the horse to maintain or increase mobility,” Cheramie says.

With that in mind, he urges owners to continue exercising their horses during winter. By continuing with a training routine, it allows the joints to stay supple and moving.

“The more horses have a chance to stay fit, the better it is for their overall joint health,” Cheramie says. “However, it is especially important for OA sufferers to have a warm-up and cool-down regimen before and after work, and that the work is not excessive.”

Cheramie recommends slow, easy stretching movements before training to help loosen muscles and get the circulation going in stiff joints. Also, allow time afterwards for winding-down so the horse can relax and not lose too much body heat all at once. This also helps keep muscles loose.⁴

Horse owners should consider the following [cold weather management tips](#):⁴

- Caution needs to be taken when riding in deep, heavy or wet snow as this may be associated with tendon injuries
- If horses are exercised enough to generate sweat, clipping is advised to help them cool down faster
- Horses that are clipped or don't have a thick hair coat need to be blanketed
- If riding is not possible, make an effort to turn horses out as often as possible
- If horses are stabled, be sure to provide ample bedding for warmth and to cushion elbows, hocks and other sensitive areas when lying down.

When OA associated pain and inflammation flare-ups do occur, contact your veterinarian to discuss a management plan.

Blocking OA Pain and Inflammation

One option owners may want to discuss with their veterinarian is administering a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) to relieve pain. There are many to choose from, but doing a little research into active ingredients, use in competitive situations and convenience in dosing can help make the choice easier.

Consider EQUIOXX® (firocoxib), the first and only FDA-approved coxib NSAID for horses. EQUIOXX contains firocoxib, which inhibits the inflammation-producing enzymes (Cyclooxygenase-2) which are associated with inflammatory processes, all while sparing the enzyme (Cyclooxygenase-1) that safeguards a number of normal body functions, including stomach protection.*

One daily dose of EQUIOXX provides effective and consistent 24-hour pain relief, making it easy to fit into feeding schedules for owners and trainers who are [managing OA in their horses](#). Other products may require as many as three doses each day. EQUIOXX is available in tablet form to complement the injectable and paste formulations.

Another pain management option veterinarians may consider is SURPASS® (1% diclofenac sodium), a unique topical NSAID that provides pain relief directly at the site of inflammation.^{5,6} SURPASS is the only FDA-approved topical application in horses for the control of pain and inflammation associated with OA in hock, knee, fetlock, and pastern joints in horses.

To that end, work with your veterinarian to develop a treatment plan that will help your horse feel his best in any type of weather.

*Clinical relevance has not been determined.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

EQUIOXX: *As with any prescription medication, prior to use, a veterinarian should perform a physical examination and review the horse's medical history. A veterinarian should advise horse owners to observe for signs of potential drug toxicity. As a class, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs may be associated with gastrointestinal, hepatic and renal toxicity. Use with other NSAIDs, corticosteroids or nephrotoxic medication should be avoided. EQUIOXX has not been tested in horses less than 1 year of age or in breeding horses, or pregnant or lactating mares. For additional information, please refer to the prescribing information or visit www.equioxx.com.*

SURPASS: *Like any medication, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as SURPASS may cause side effects. These are usually mild and affect primarily the gastrointestinal system, but more serious side effects can occur. NSAIDs should only be administered under the direction of a licensed professional. SURPASS topical cream is only approved for use in horses and has not been evaluated in breeding, pregnant, or lactating horses, or in horses under 1 year of age. Do not exceed the recommended dose. Wear gloves*

when administering SURPASS. If direct contact with skin occurs, wash immediately with soap and water. Please refer to the package insert for complete product information. For additional information, please refer to the prescribing information or visit http://www.bi-vetmedica.com/species/equine/products/joint_health_portfolio/surpass.html.

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On January 1st, 2017, Merial became part of the Boehringer Ingelheim group. As the second largest animal health business in the world, Boehringer Ingelheim is committed to making the industry even better at improving animal health. With more than 10,000 employees worldwide, Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health has products available in more than 150 markets and a global presence in 99 countries. For more information about Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health, [click here](#).

About Boehringer Ingelheim

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¹Arthritis Foundation. Weather and arthritis pain. Available at: <http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/pain-management/tips/weather-pain.php> Accessed February 15, 2017.

²Schlueter AE, Orth MW. Equine osteoarthritis: a brief review of the disease and its causes. *Equine Comp Exerc Physiol.* 2004;1(4):221-231.

³Oke S. Osteoarthritis: not just an old horse disease. Available at: <http://www.thehorse.com/Print.aspx?ID=16233> Accessed February 16, 2017.

⁴University of Minnesota, Extension, Equine Winter Care. Available at: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/horse/care/equine-winter-care/> Accessed February 17, 2017.

⁵SURPASS Freedom of Information Summary. Greensboro, NC: IDEXX Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; 2004.

⁶Caldwell FJ, Mueller PO, Lynn RC, Budsberg SC. Effect of topical application of diclofenac liposomal suspension on experimentally induced subcutaneous inflammation in horses. *Am J Vet Res.* 2004;65(3):271-276.