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Winter

WARM UP



Is your horse feeling the cold? Here are the top four warming herbs you can offer him this winter.

BY JESSICA LYNN

During the cooler months of fall, we begin preparations to ensure our horses will be properly cared for during the winter. This includes getting blankets repaired and scotch guarded, and taking a look at diet changes to meet the caloric needs of the season. I also take a look at my herb supplies to make sure I have everything on hand I'll need to support my horses through the winter.

Cold weather support

I have found that senior horses are usually the ones most adversely affected by the arrival of colder weather, along with some younger horses who have not yet gone through their first winter. Both have a harder time regulating their body heat – the seniors because of age and health-related issues (i.e. thyroid or metabolic), and the youngsters because they have not yet learned to regulate their bodies. For these horses, it is particularly important to put some diet changes in place, and this includes incorporating some nice warming herbs.

Hot and cold

The Chinese categorized herbs by their “temperatures”, meaning they divided them into cold, cool, neutral, warm and hot. Cold and cool herbs reduce fevers, neutral herbs balance the effects of other herbs, and warm herbs alleviate chills and warm the meridians and extremities while promoting circulation. Hot herbs can dispel the cold, but the herb most often associated with this action is cayenne; however, it is not advisable to give cayenne to horses on a daily basis. Some will not even entertain eating it.

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There are a number of herbs you can make into teas, which you can then pour over buckets of feed when you get into the very cold nights, snow and storms. These are known as warming herbs, and they can help warm a horse from the inside out on cold nights.


TOP FOUR WARMING HERBS

1 Cinnamon – This spice is a warming agent and also regarded as an antiseptic and digestive tonic. Recent studies have shown that for IR/metabolic horses, cinnamon may help regulate insulin and lower blood sugar. Cinnamon has the ability to increase peripheral blood flow and is mostly available in the form of a stick or ground powder. The Chinese have long used cinnamon as a natural remedy – it helps



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 THE CHINESE HAVE LONG USED CINNAMON AS A NATURAL REMEDY – IT HELPS DRY DAMPNESS IN THE BODY AND HAS THE ABILITY TO WARM PEOPLE AND HORSES WHO ARE ALWAYS COLD AND SUFFERING FROM POOR CIRCULATION. 

dry dampness in the body and has the ability to warm people and horses who are always cold and suffering from poor circulation. But for horses, especially metabolically challenged ones, less is more. I would not give more than one teaspoon per day if you are feeding the powder form.

2 *Ginger* – This warming herb has long been used for the circulatory and digestive systems. It can improve circulation to all parts of the body, including the extremities, and is also known for its lymph-cleansing properties. The entire root can be used medicinally, and it can be made into a tea, which is my favorite way of using it for my own horses. By grating it coarsely or slicing it thinly, I add a handful to a one-quart mason jar, then steep it in boiling water. When cooled to just warm, I add the entire contents to a bucket of feed. Ginger can also be combined with other warming herbs to make a very fragrant and inviting addition to winter bucket feeds.



3 *Kelp* – This is another great herb for the winter months because it is also warming in nature. It contains micronutrients, as well as iodine, that support the thyroid (known to be the master “heater” of the body). The thyroid in horses and humans is responsible for regulating metabolism and body temperature. You only need to feed a small amount – maybe up to a tablespoon per day added to feed. This is not an herb you should free feed.



Warming herbal horse tea

- 1 qt (4 cups) water
- 1 finger of fresh ginger sliced thinly or grated thickly (warming and immune enhancer)
- 1 small piece of licorice root, 1”-2” inches sliced (also helps fight depression in stalled horses)
- 1 tablespoon dried lemon balm herb, cut and sifted type (relaxing aid)
- 1 tablespoon parsley flakes (digestive aid)
- 1-2 cinnamon sticks (warming and digestive aid)
- 1 tablespoon dried orange peel and rind (to add some sweetness to the blend and aroma)

In a pot, bring the water to a boil, add the herbs, turn off the heat and let steep for 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool to just warm, strain the herbs, and use the remaining liquid to pour over feed in cold weather. You can add a teaspoon of salt to the warm liquid so you encourage your horse to drink more! Serves one horse.




4 *Licorice root* – Although not technically a warming herb, I like to use licorice root in the winter months because it aids in the production of stomach mucus. This lowers the high acid levels that can lead to stomach disorders including ulcers, and horses love the flavor – it’s great for those that are stalled more during the colder months.



Hint

The flavor associated with winter is salty, and some horses will need to be encouraged to drink more water during this season. Salt is not an herb, but it is an important feed additive during cold months. I prefer the pink Himalayan salt because it contains more minerals.

Tea time!

My favorite thing to do when it’s very cold is brew up a batch of warming herb tea for my horses (see sidebar). You can get the ingredients for the tea and keep them on hand for the coldest of nights. Your horse will thank you for it! 



JESSICA LYNN IS A WRITER AND THE OWNER OF EARTH SONG RANCH, A LICENSED SUPPLEMENT MANUFACTURER, SPECIALIZING IN PRE/PROBIOTIC BLENDS, HERBAL BLENDS AND BLENDS FOR HORSES, DOGS AND CATS, BASED IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. JESSICA HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN ALTERNATIVE HEALTH CARE, HOMEOPATHY AND NUTRITION FOR ALMOST 50 YEARS. SHE PERSONALLY RESEARCHES AND FORMULATES ALL OF THE EARTH SONG RANCH NUTRITIONAL PRODUCTS INCLUDING HER HIGH POTENCY PROBIOTIC AND DIGESTIVE ENZYMES, AND SELLS OTHER PRODUCTS THAT SHE USES AND BELIEVES IN ON HER WEBSITE EARTHSONGRANCH.COM. CONTACT JESSICA VIA E-MAIL AT JESSICA@EARTHSONGRANCH.COM OR 951-514-9700 FRIEND EARTH SONG RANCH ON FB AT [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/#!/EARTHSONGRANCH](https://www.facebook.com/#!/EARTHSONGRANCH)