

Blankets, Sheets, Turnouts: How to Measure

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tips to get the perfect blanket fit

Does your horse need protection while outdoors? Wind, rain, insects, sunlight, warm and cold weather, snow, and more can all wreak havoc on your horse's beauty and health. Thankfully, there are a range of equine blankets and sheets to suit any need around the barn, pasture, or show and competition ring.

But do you know how to correctly measure your horse so her turnout blankets and insect or dress sheets properly fit? Use these helpful hints and simple guidelines to ensure your horse is perfectly dressed in protection and style.

the dangers of ill-fitted blankets or sheets

Blankets and sheets help create a protective barrier between your horse and the outside world. However, this protection is compromised when blankets and sheets do not properly fit your horse. Blankets that are too large leave gaps into which insects and mud can enter and become trapped against your horse's coat. If too small, they don't cover the portions of your horse's body that they should, which leaves you with a false sense of confidence.

But in addition to sacrificed protection, ill-fitted blankets or sheets can also be a danger to your horse. For instance, a sheet that is too large may slip under your horse's belly and cause her to stumble or fall while turned out to pasture. Similarly, a blanket that is too tight could restrict her movement or rub your horse's skin and cause an irritation or, worse, infected sore. Therefore, properly measuring your horse to ensure the best blanket or sheet fit is vital to her protection, comfort, and safety.

measure your horse in six simple steps

Basically, all equine blankets and sheets have similar designs. They cover your horse's barrel from withers to tail and hang to just below the elbows and stifles. However, not all blankets or sheets are cut in the same manner. As such, check the manufacturer's measuring guidelines to ensure the best fit of your chosen blanket or sheet.

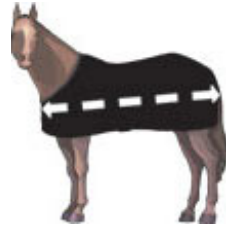
Regardless of the manufacturer's recommendations, however, there are some simple ways to ensure you obtain the correct measurements of your horse. If possible, corral a companion or tie up your horse to help keep her still while you measure her. Then:

blanket fit checklist

Ensure your horse's blanket properly fits with this simple checklist:

- Can you easily slip your hand between the blanket and withers? A blanket or sheet that is too tight here can cause your horse extreme discomfort or worse, injury.
- Can you slide your hand up to your horse's shoulder area? If it's too tight here, hair could rub off and irritations or infected sores could occur.
- Can your horse graze without pain? Place a treat at floor level and watch for pressure near the front buckles as your horse reaches for the treat.
- Can your horse pass manure without obstruction from the tail flap?
- Can you fit the blanket without the surcingles being over-tight?

1. Ensure your horse stands squarely in a natural position.
2. Stand on your horse's left with the end of your measuring tape in your left hand. Place the end of the measuring tape at the point where your horse's neck meets the center of her chest.
3. Using your right hand, draw the tape along her left side and over the widest part of her shoulder. Continue to draw the tape in this manner for the extent of your reach.
4. Note the measurement. Then mark the spot of your reach with your right thumb. Move down to the spot you've marked with your thumb. Place the end of the measuring tape at this point.
5. Using your right hand, continue to draw the tape along your horse's side and across the point of her buttocks, which is the hindmost part of the quarters and about 10 to 12 inches below where the tail and body meet. Note this measurement.
6. Add your two measurements together to get your blanket size.



the multiple blanket benefit

To help prevent the spread of skin infections, never use a single blanket on multiple horses. It may seem economically sound to share dress sheets or turnout blankets between horses within your barn or pasture. However, the cost of eradicating a skin infection amongst a herd of horses can be extremely high. Therefore, most experts recommend each horse has her own specific set of dress or insect sheets and turnout blankets.

Better yet, keep at least one extra set of blankets and sheets on hand for each horse. This ensures you'll always be ready to protect your horse should her other blanket become dirtied or in need of minor repairs.