Water Trough De-icers Overview

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

winter water for your horse

Water is the most important nutrient your horse needs any time of the year. It is essential for organ function, proper digestion and other body processes.

In the winter months, horses tend to drink less water than they need, but it is still a vital health requirement. Horses will drink warm water, which is difficult to provide in the winter, especially if you live where the outside temperature goes below freezing for any period of time. It is essential to keep fresh water available at all times - that means high quality, clean, and unfrozen. In fact, the best way to keep your horse drinking enough water in the winter is to make sure it is ice free, even if the water is outside. You can easily do this with a stock tank de-icer.

A stock tank de-icer can be a timesaver for any barn. No more hauling warm water to the trough, no more breaking up the ice on top so your horse can get to this valuable resource.

De-icers come in two styles: floating and submersible.

Floating models are created for buoyancy. You place them in a stock tank and they keep the surface water thawed. Floating de-icers may or may not be completely enclosed, and often include styrofoam to keep them afloat. They are controlled by a thermostat and include an automatic shut-off and turn-on feature. If you use a floating de-icer, make sure your horse does not play with it or chew the cord.

Another type of de-icer is not buoyant. They are submersible and safely sit at the bottom of the water tank or are securely clipped to the side of the tank. They prevent ice build-up in the tank and are designed so that a playful horse will not remove it from the water. The heating elements are protected from the horse. These also have automatic thermostats so that the water stays at a constant temperature.

Some devises function as both a floating and a submersible unit. Out of the box, the Ultimate Stock Tank De-Icer functions as a floating de-icer. With the push of a button, it converts to a submersible unit. It also includes a protective cage, cord clip, and cord protector.

Clean tank tip

One tip to keep troughs and buckets clean without dumping them on the ground, creating ice and dangerous footing for your horse, is to use a small net to skim the debris from the top of the water. Keep the net on a hook by the source of the water. Although it will likely freeze, once you place it in the water the next time, it will thaw out enough to use.

If your stock tank de-icer is not thermostatically regulated to automatically turn on/off as temperatures plummet or rise, you can get a thermostatically-controlled outlet. These inexpensive units save you the time and trouble of constantly monitoring outdoor winter temperatures. They plug right into your standard outlet, and then you simply plug your de-icer into this outlet. It will power on your de-icer when the temperature drops low enough.

Heated buckets or hoses

If your horse has a bucket in his stall or turnout area, a great way to keep the water thawed and palatable is to provide a heated bucket. With a heated bucket, a reliable water source is never far away.

When you need to capture water from an outdoor spicket, but it's too cold to have a standard garden hose attached all winter, try a thermostatically-controlled heated hose or a hose heater. The heated hose prevents standing water inside the hose from

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freezing and thus causing damage. They are a great way to transport water to stock tanks all winter long. The hose heater is used with your existing garden hose, and it simply warms your hose while in storage, so standing water inside the hose won't freeze between uses.

Keeping water thawed is essential for your horse's health. It may make the difference between good health and dehydration.

We Recommend

Heated Water Buckets

Ultimate Stock Tank De-Icer

Thermo Cube

Thermo Hose

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