SINCE 1929

Augusta Cooperative FARM BUREAU, INC.

PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
& FEES
PAID
ACFB

AUGUSTA COOPERATIVE FARM BUREAU, INC.
1205B RICHMOND RD.
STAUNTON, VA 24401

SINCE 1929

Augusta Cooperative FARM BUREAU, INC.

AGRONOMY & EQUINE EDITOR

November 2026



AUGUSTACOOP.COM
/AUGUSTACOOPERATIVEFARMBUREAU
/AUGUSTACOOPFB

FALL FORESIGHT: SEASONAL PREVENTIVE HORSE CARE

Check off these 8 important tasks before the colder weather arrives.

Autumn is the time for preventive horse health care and winterizing equine facilities.

As you put away your warm-weather clothes in preparation for the cooler days ahead, you also need to be taking steps to prepare your barn and meet your horse's needs before the weather turns bad. Check off this list of must-do tasks when putting your preparations in place.

1. Check your water system and heater

Ample water intake is essential for normal bodily and digestive functions and to reduce the risk of impaction colic, particularly in winter. The average horse needs to take in 5 to 10 gallons of water per day in cold climates, says Holly J. Helbig, DVM, an equine technical services veterinarian for Zoetis and former owner of Hawthorne Veterinary Clinic, in Dublin, Ohio.

"Your horse consumes the maximum amount of water when it's lukewarm," she says. "Research shows that horses drink about 40% less water when it's close to a frozen state. One option is to use heated water buckets that are easy to hang and relatively inexpensive compared to installing automatic waterers or tank heaters. If your horses live outside in the winter, a heated water tank is an excellent option but (like buckets) should be cleaned on a regular basis. The key to ensuring available water in the winter is to start early and be prepared."

She urges property owners to check wiring and plumbing in the fall by giving everything a test run. "You don't want to be stuck in the cold and snow trying to provide adequate water to your horses," she says. "I've been there, hauling water from a house bathtub down to the barn … it's not fun."

Also remember to unhook your hoses from water spigots before freezing temps hit. If your farm doesn't have a frost-free hydrant that drops below ground-freezing levels, consider having one or more plumbed into your system.

2. Care for your equipment properly

Don't forget to perform routine maintenance on your tractors, trailers, and hauling vehicles prior to winter so they work efficiently when needed most (e.g., for a midwinter veterinary emergency or when access ways need clearing).

3. Acquire and store hay

You'll want to put up sufficient hay to accommodate all your horses until the next year's first cutting becomes available.

"Horses have very small stomachs—a 2-4-gallon capacity—in proportion to their overall size," explains Helbig. "They continuously release gastric acid unlike humans, who only release gastric acid when they are hungry or eating. Due to this dynamic, horses do best when fed free-choice hay if not fighting obesity. A mature horse eats 2-2.5% of its body weight a day, equivalent to 20-25 pounds of hay for a 1,000-pound horse."

Calculate your hay needs and buy your supply early to avoid quality and price fluctuations that can occur in winter.

"The type of hay you purchase depends on the nutritional demands on your horse," says Helbig. "There is no 'one size fits all' when choosing hay, but in all cases it should be of good quality to avoid having to supplement the diet; this saves you money in the long run. You can use your basic senses to make an educated decision as to what is quality: Look for a green color (no sun-bleaching or dark areas of mold), smell for sweetness (no moldy odor), and feel for excess heat or moisture. You can also have hay analyzed by a laboratory to determine its true nutritional value."

Ideally, store your hay off the ground in a dry and covered environment to prevent mold growth, says Helbig. "Stack bale layers in alternating, interlocking fashion," she says. "To increase air flow, stack at least the bottommost layer of bales on their cut sides, such that baling twine doesn't touch the floor."

4. Assess barn air quality

In many cases barns are closed up in winter to preserve warmth, but this can exacerbate equine respiratory issues. "Horse barns need air exchange to remove moisture, prevent condensation, and provide fresh air," says Helbig. "Proper ventilation is crucial to keep horses healthy, free from allergies and infectious respiratory diseases, and to minimize exposure to environmental irritants."

During winter an optimal ventilation rate per stabled horse is 12-19 liters per second (25-40 cubic feet per minute), she says. While this is difficult to measure, she suggests a few pointers to achieve a healthy ventilation rate:

- Multiple small air outlets create better ventilation than one large opening at the end of the aisle.
- Proper insulation of the roof and walls keeps the barn warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer and helps eliminate moisture accumulation and condensation.
- Avoid using a leaf blower to clear debris from the aisle, as this stirs up irritants.
- Remove horses from the barn when mucking stalls and sweeping (or raking) aisles.
- Don't store hay above stabling areas.

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

5. Check blankets

"Blanketing depends on the horse's environment and workload," Helbig says. "Is the horse body-clipped, trace-clipped, or completely grown out? Horses don't recognize temperature changes until approximately 40 degrees F, at which point their body naturally starts to acclimate. You can then decide to blanket or not."

Remember, if you begin blanketing before your horse grows out a full winter hair coat, you must be committed to blanketing through the winter.

Before placing blankets in an accessible place for ease of use, make sure they are clean and in good repair.

6. Complete a preventive care checklist

Keep vaccines up to date: Chrissie Schneider, DVM, MS, Dipl. ABVP Equine, senior equine professional services veterinarian for Merck Animal Health, in Columbus, Ohio, stresses that where a horse lives and his specific disease exposure dictate which vaccinations he should receive in the fall. She recommends conferring with your veterinarian about which vaccines to give based on your horse's individual risk.

"The decision to boost mosquito virus vaccines (EEE, WEE, and WNV) in the fall depends on the length of the mosquito season in your area or where your horse will be traveling," she says. "Potential exposure to transient horse populations—at boarding facilities, clinics, show environments—increases risk of (exposure to and infection with) equine herpesvirus (EHV-1, EHV-4) and equine influenza virus (EIV) that are spread horse to horse through respiratory secretions. Respiratory vaccines are usually boosted spring and fall. Pregnant mares require an individualized vaccine schedule based on the expected foaling date; their EHV-1 booster vaccines usually coincide with the fall time of year."

She adds that diseases such as rabies are year-round risks, and all horses should receive their core rabies vaccine once a year. "Some prefer to give the rabies booster in the spring along with the rest of the spring vaccines," Schneider says. "Some prefer to give it in the fall to decrease the number of vaccines given in spring. Either approach is reasonable because horses can be exposed to rabid wildlife any time of year."

Another pathogen (disease-causing organism) horses can be exposed to anytime is a toxin produced by the soil-dwelling Clostridium botulinum bacterium. Typically horses get exposed to the toxin by ingesting decaying forage or feed contaminated with animal remains. Rarely, they are exposed through wound contamination. Botulism vaccine boosters might be appropriate in the fall because owners tend to feed more hay—especially round bales that, if not stored properly, are more prone to contamination and spoiling—in winter, says Schneider.

Carry out fecal egg counts: Deworming strategies are best applied based on a horse's individual fecal egg count (FEC), says Helbig. Schneider adds that strategic deworming—deworming high shedders more often than low shedders—is vital to slow down the rate of intestinal parasite resistance to deworming medications. Your vet can collect fecal samples in the fall and advise you on proper deworming protocol for your horses.

Implement deworming strategies "In most areas of the USA, it is ideal to deworm all adult horses in late fall, regardless of whether their FEC indicates they are low, moderate, or high shedders," says Schneider. Ask your vet when to deworm.

Fall, however, is a strategic time to deworm, because horses will have accumulated parasite burdens over the course of the spring and summer grazing seasons. Veterinarians typically recommend an effective dewormer (e.g., ivermectin, moxidectin) against small strongyles and praziquantel—available in combination with ivermectin or moxidectin—against tapeworms.

Deworming recommendations for horses younger than 3 differ from those for adult horses and need to also target ascarids (roundworms) that pose concerns for foals, weanlings, and young horses, she adds. Fenbendazole is the current dewormer of choice against ascarids.

Schneider recommends using a weight tape to dose your horse based on body weight. She also stresses the importance of conferring with your vet about your deworming strategy.

Clean your male horse's sheath: Sheath cleaning can be done any time of year, and many owners conveniently pair it with a dental exam and floating to take advantage of sedation. "Thorough cleaning is facilitated when a horse descends his penis outside the sheath due to sedation," Schneider explains. "This also enables visual examination to look for tumors in the external genitalia of your gelding or stallion. In the sheath and penis, gray-coated horses tend to develop melanomas (cancerous tumors) while squamous cell carcinoma (a type of skin cancer) develops in horses lacking pigment, like many Paints and Appaloosas."

Helbig says she cleans sheaths yearly in spring but prescribes a follow-up fall cleaning for horses predisposed to accumulating excess smegma—often associated with tail rubbing—or cancerous lesions.

Test for pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID, aka equine Cushing's disease): The pituitary gland produces adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH) that stimulates cortisol release from the adrenal gland. In the fall, the amount of ACTH horses' bodies produce increases temporarily in what's called a "seasonal rise." Helbig says in her experience, this increase is relatively small and doesn't cause problems for most horses. However, for older horses or individuals in early stages of PPID, it can lead to an initial bout of the painful hoof disease laminitis during the fall months.

"There are multiple tests available for diagnosis of PPID," Schneider explains. "Currently, the most widely used diagnostic test measures ACTH."

Vets used to avoid testing horses with suspected PPID in the fall because of that normal seasonal rise. However, she says, "research has shown that the autumn rise in ACTH is more dramatic in horses with PPID, so much so that the fall is actually a great time to test them. There are now seasonal reference ranges available to help distinguish horses with PPID from normal horses based on time of year testing is performed. The Equine Endocrinology Group's 2019 Recommendations for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction identifies fall months as mid-July through mid-November for purposes of PPID testing."

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

7. Consult your farrier about hoof care

Each fall assess your horse's workload and environment. Helbig says while horseshoes provide hooves support, protection, and traction, the need in each situation differs.

Many horse owners pull their horses' shoes for the winter. "Shoes cause drag on the musculoskeletal system, interfere with traction on slippery ground, and often get packed with treacherous snowballs," says Helbig. "Some feel that barefoot provides a more natural lifestyle. It is also easier to monitor horses in winter if not worrying about pulled or shifted shoes in turnout. Be cognizant that barefoot hooves may be prone to bruising," though one alternative is to boot your barefoot horse when you ride.

Old nail holes in barefoot horses also tend to split and chip, says Helbig, "wearing the hoof down without much to attach a shoe to in the spring." She adds that seasonal hoof care works best if you, your veterinarian, and your farrier collaborate to make decisions for your horse based on the climate and terrain you'll encounter or ride on in winter.

8. Manage pastures and manure

Consider seeding pastures in autumn, before winter snow falls upon them. "Seeding is best accomplished when temperatures are above 60 degrees," says Helbig. "Allow germination over four to six weeks (if weather is conducive to it) before putting horses back on the pasture. Rotational turnout pastures are important to allow a pasture to rest. Dividing a pasture is another way to allow turnout while one section at a time can rest."

She also suggests spreading compost in the pasture before the ground freezes.

Take-Home Message

Like the industrious ant showed the lazy grasshopper in Aesop's Fables, hard work and preparation are key to efficiency and success come winter. Working through a fall checklist will not only keep your herd as healthy as possible but also ease caretaking of your horses and farm during inclement weather.

The Horse

FALL COLIC PREVENTION FOR HORSES

Nutritionist Dr. Clair Thunes shares advice on how to reduce your horse's risk of colicking this fall.

Colic can be a very frightening event to go through with your horse, and it's true that (at least anecdotally) colic is more common during certain times of year. Fall is one of those times, and certainly weather is variable in the fall. We can't control the weather. However, it's not the weather causing the colic. Rather, weather causes changes in management and behavior that lead to increased impaction risk. If we understand this, then we can do things to try and reduce the risk.

Risk Factor No. 1: Forage Changes

For horses on pasture, the quality of the grass declines in the fall, and often we move horses from pasture to a more hay-based diet. Grass is of course far higher in moisture than hay, so by moving to a hay-based diet, water intake is reduced. If this change in forage occurs quickly, the horse might not have time to adapt and change drinking habits to accommodate for the reduced moisture in the diet. This can lead to increased impaction risk. As with all dietary changes, moving from pasture to hay needs to occur gradually. If you feed your horses any supplemental concentrate feed, consider adding water to this feed to help increase water intake at least during the transition to drier forage.

Risk Factor No. 2: Reduced Mobility

Horses are often brought in to stalls as the weather gets colder. On pasture horses are free to maintain a level of movement that's not possible in a stalled environment. Movement is important for gut motility, so again this management change may increase the risk of impaction.

Sometimes when the weather is cold we might not be so keen to ride, or riding might not even be an option if you don't have an indoor arena, so movement is further restricted. But, remember that even when the weather is less than favorable and your log fire or central heating are calling your name, your horse needs to move! In the winter if our horses are stall bound, we need to get them moving even on their days off from riding. Consider longing, walking under saddle, or hand-walking. All will help stimulate movement in the gastrointestinal tract.

Risk Factor No. 3: Hydration Challenges

Daytime temperatures can still be quite mild in the fall, and yet nights start to get chilly. Keeping up on hydration can be challenging this time of year, especially if water freezes at night. Certainly, dehydrated horses are more at risk of impactions.

Researchers have shown that horses prefer slightly tepid water, so when temperatures drop water consumption can go way down. It's important to monitor water intake. Learn how to detect dehydration and check your horse at least daily. Also check that water sources haven't frozen. Make sure your barn has a plan for dealing with iced water troughs and buckets. This could range from smashing ice frequently during the day or using bucket heaters. Caution: Be careful when using bucket heaters to ensure they don't cause electric shock to your horse when he drinks. This would be terrible inadvertent punishment of a desired behavior!

In areas where ice is minimal, something as simple as a floating tennis ball in the trough can be enough to stop it from freezing over.

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

Make sure your horse is consuming enough salt, especially during periods of seasonal transition. Sodium helps stimulate thirst and a desire to drink. A horse that has consumed enough sodium might be more determined to find water. A 1,100-pound horse needs 10 grams of sodium a day when at rest. This amount is provided by 1 ounce of table salt, which is about 2 tablespoons. So feeding 1 tablespoon of table salt per 500 pounds of body weight is a good rule of thumb.

My preference is to feed salt directly each day to the horse rather than relying on a salt block. However, I always provide a salt block, too, so if the horse wants more salt it is available. If relying solely on a block for the daily sodium intake maintenance, a 1,100-pound horse needs to consume a 2-pound block each month.

Take-Home Message

Sometimes, no matter what we do, colic can occur. The key is to be aware of the common causes and to then take action. With thoughtful management, you can help reduce the risk of your horse colicking.
The Horse

HOW CAN I CHANGE MY HORSE'S HAY SAFELY?

An equine nutritionist explains the best way to switch your horse to a new hay and what to do if you have limited hay storage.

I have two main concerns with continually changing the forage source in your horse's diet. First, when you change the fiber type abruptly, it can shock the microbes in the horse's gastrointestinal tract and cause digestive upset. Second, maintaining a balanced diet that is optimal can be challenging when you are unaware of the forage's nutritional content.



Finding a reliable hay supplier is easier said than done; however, if you can travel to pick up the hay, I recommend inquiring with local hay suppliers about purchasing from them regularly. They might be willing to store hay for you, which could increase the consistency of your hay batches.

Testing Hay When Making Horse Hay Changes

If you cannot change hay suppliers or none in your area have a storage system, testing every shipment to make sure it is adequate for your horse is the gold standard. Hay batches often have large variations in nutritional values such as protein, energy, minerals, sugars, and even fiber digestibility. Maintaining your horse on a quality ration balancer that provides a digestible source of vitamins and minerals will reduce the risk of dietary deficiencies from the forage.

If you are consistently getting new shipments of hay, testing every single batch can become costly. So, despite this being the gold standard practice, it might not be practical. If you cannot test each shipment, at least test a few batches so you can better understand the forage's variability.

Maintaining Equine GI Health With Hay Changes

As mentioned, one of the main concerns with abrupt fiber changes is the risk of digestive upset. The large population of microbes in the equine gastrointestinal tract gets accustomed and adapts to the day-to-day diet. Therefore, when your horse switches from one hay type to another frequently, it can be challenging to maintain optimal gut health. A simple way to reduce the risk of gastrointestinal upset when switching hay types is to save a couple of bales (even just two or three) to mix with the new batch of hay.

Get your new shipment of hay while you still have a couple of bales remaining from the last batch. Then begin to feed the new forage in combination with the previous batch. You can start with 25% of the new forage and 75% of the previous batch. Ideally, you would maintain this ratio for a couple of days prior to moving to a 50/50 split. From there, you would continue to increase the proportion of new hay in the diet as you decrease the previous batch. In a perfect situation this transition would happen over seven to 14 days, but any type of slower transition is better than an abrupt change. The slow transition will reduce the shock on your horse's gastrointestinal tract and allow the microbial population time to adapt to the new forage slowly.

Take-Home Message

Sourcing hay can be challenging, especially when storage is limited; however, with careful management, you can reduce the risk of gastrointestinal upset for your horse. Additionally, testing hay when possible and using a quality ration balancer can reduce the risk of nutrient deficiencies in your horse's diet.
The Horse



NOVEMBER 5TH

5:30 – 8:00 PM (after store hours)

FRIENDS & FAMILY SALE

40% OFF ALL BOOTS & CLOTHING

All Brands

EXCLUSIVE AUGUSTA CO-OP MEMBER EVENT

If you are a current member
you are invited to this event!

PLUS DEALS THROUGHOUT THE STORE: PET, MILWAUKEE, YETI, WILD BIRD SEED, & MORE!

STAUNTON LOCATION ONLY.


First Bank
& Trust Company
Experience the advantages of having local bankers that understand agriculture and put your farm **first**.
TOP
20
AGRICULTURAL BANKS
3RD IN THE NATION
by Dollar Volume | FDIC, Data as of Q4 2025
TALK WITH A LOCAL AG EXPERT TODAY.
1563 Commerce Rd.
Verona, VA 24482
First
firstbank.com | Member FDIC







Loyall Life Dog Food - $5 off/bag
November 1-30, 2026. All locations.

EVENTS / CALENDAR

FRIENDS & FAMILY SALE (AFTER HOURS)

November 5, 2026 • 5:30PM - 8PM

Staunton location only.
40% off boots & clothing! Plus deals throughout the store.
Exclusive Co-op member event!

BLACK FRIDAY SALE

November 6-7, 2026 (Normal Store Hours)

Staunton location only.
40% off boots & clothing!
This event is open to the public.

Scan to view event details

AGRONOMY CUSTOMER APPRECIATION

February 5, 2027 • 11AM-2PM

Augusta Expo - Building 2
277 Expo Rd, Fishersville, VA 22939
Meet the agronomy team and enjoy lunch on us!
Vendors will be in attendance.

RSVP required by January 29, 2027.
Staci Alger • SAlger@AugustaCoop.com
(540) 885-1265 x 253

VENDOR DAY

February 17, 2027 • 4PM - 7PM

Blue Ridge Community College - Plecker Center
57 College Ln, Weyers Cave, VA 24486
The largest farming brands on site in one location!
Huge deals, door prizes, goody bags, snacks, and more!