

# GET SET FOR AUTUMN!



MAKE THIS YOUR  
HEALTHIEST AUTUMN EVER!

## HOW TO FEED A BALANCED DIET

TO CLIP OR NOT TO CLIP?  
FIND OUT WHAT'S RIGHT  
FOR YOUR HORSE

## PREVENTING STOMACH ULCERS

SEASONAL HEALTHCARE:  
YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE  
FROM WORMING TO THORNS



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# Latest News

An update on what's been going on in the horseworld

## The perfect combination!



Use **Vetrogut<sup>™</sup>**  
**Acid Fix**

During periods of stress or change, such as when increasing time in the stable this autumn

Use **Vetrogut<sup>™</sup>**  
**Probalance**

When your horse needs a boost as his autumn diet changes

**Use together...**

To supercharge vitality this autumn

## More than one in three leisure horses at risk of gastric ulcers

Many owners believe only high-level competition horses are at risk of gastric ulcers, but did you know that 37% of leisure horses suffer from them?

Gastric ulcers are particularly prevalent at this time of year with horses spending more time indoors and less time out at grass. The reduction in grazing time creates a perfect environment for painful and debilitating gastric ulcers to develop.

Find out more in our feature on p10 and consider supporting your horse with Vetrogut Acid Fix, one of the new products in Animalife's autumn range.

This pioneering treatment is formulated to reduce the risk of gastric ulcers by neutralising stomach acid and offering long-term protection.

Unlike other products designed to buffer stomach acid, Vetrogut Acid Fix is 100% natural and has a unique formulation that breaks down slowly over time.

Also new this autumn is Vetrogut Probalance, a next-generation gut balancer formulated to support your horse as grass loses its nutrients and diets change.

Like a multivitamin for your horse, a balancer offers broad nutritional support but without the calories. Vetrogut Probalance is unique in that it offers a host of benefits, including improving digestion by boosting levels of friendly bacteria, reducing inflammation, supporting the immune system and helping your horse perform at their peak.

**Readers of Get Set For Autumn can enjoy an extra 50% free on both products for a limited time. Ask your local stockist or visit [www.animalife.co.uk](http://www.animalife.co.uk) for more information.**

## Suffolk Punch landmark


The birth of a rare Suffolk Punch filly foal using sexed semen to determine gender is being lauded as a huge step forward for the breed.

There are fewer than 300 Suffolk Punches in the world, meaning every female born is vital to the survival of this iconic but endangered British breed.

Mare Ruby and stallion Holbeach Iggy were carefully selected and matched based on their genetics as part of a project between The Rare Breed Survival Trust and Nottingham Trent University. Pioneering technology allowed the semen to be sorted prior to insemination to ensure the foetus was female.



Chief Executive of the Rare Breed Survival Trust, Christopher Price, said: "The project demonstrates the viability of using new techniques for selecting female foals in order to increase the breeding population much more rapidly than could be achieved through relying on traditional methods. We hope it will prove to be a model for more projects in the future."



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## How to feed a balanced diet this autumn

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As the seasons change, so do your horse's nutritional needs. What are the steps to take to ensure their diet is optimised for the cooler months?

With grazing losing much of its nutritional value, autumn is a good time to step back and assess your horse's diet. This is especially important for competition horses and those in medium to heavy work.

**The biggest challenges at this time of year are :**

- Ensuring your horse has enough fibre in their diet by feeding forage. All equines should receive 2% of their total bodyweight in good-quality forage
- Providing a good balance of nutrients in the diet for complete health and wellbeing
- Monitoring weight in order to maintain a healthy body condition
- Encouraging your horse to drink enough water at a time when temperatures drop

### 5 top tips

1. Use this time to plan ahead for the winter months
2. Make any routine changes gradually. A dramatic change in routine or diet risks colic
3. Ensure your horse has ad lib access to good quality forage. Fibre is everything at this time of year
4. Cool nights and warm days can cause a spike of sugar in grazing, so keep an eye on equines prone to laminitis and general weight gain. Horses can put on weight in autumn!
5. A balancer is a useful and cost-effective addition to every horse's diet



## Fibre and forage

Providing enough fibre is absolutely essential for a healthy digestive system and to reduce the risk of colic. As the weather cools, fibre fermentation helps your horse keep warm and regulate body temperature.

It is worth noting that the nutritional value of forage varies depending on the time it was harvested and the different types of grasses present. As such it is worth considering getting your forage analysed to better understand where there may be deficiencies. This is especially important for equines prone to laminitis, equine metabolic syndrome and Cushing's Disease (now also known as Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction or PPID).

In terms of quantities, allow your horse access to ad lib forage 24/7.

## Balance of nutrients

At a time of year when it can be hard to provide your horse with the full spectrum of nutrients, a balancer is a powerful addition.

Suitable for all animals, be they competing at a high level or enjoying Riding Club activities, a balancer is a clever and cost-effective way to ensure your horse has all the essential vitamins, minerals and quality protein needed for a well-rounded diet. Three major benefits of feeding a balancer at this time of year are:

- To supplement a forage-only diet
- To maintain a healthy weight and body condition
- To support healthy gut function and reduce the risk of winter colic



### Key benefits of Vetrogut Probalance:-

Vetrogut Probalance acts like a multivitamin for your leisure or sports horse providing all over vitality and health. Published animal and in-vitro research show Vetrogut Probalance supports:

- Gut health – helps support intestinal tissue and the beneficial bacteria
- Inflammation – helps reduce systemic inflammation
- Immune function – reinforces the first and second lines of active defence
- Improved key performance markers beneficial for training and performance
- Proven to enhance nutrient digestibility

Animalife is adding a balancer to its range suitable for both the leisure and performance horse. In addition to the benefits above, **Vetrogut Probalance** offers a high level of support for the immune system and aids in recovery, making it a perfect everyday choice for horses competing at all levels.

## Weight watching

Autumn is the ideal time to ensure your horse is in the best possible condition to cope with the upcoming winter. While much of the UK tends to have mild weather with only short spells of extreme cold, we regularly experience long periods of wet and windy weather, which can be just as challenging for your horse to cope with.

But do not make the mistake of trying to build your horse up at this time of year. Just as with us, it is much better to maintain a regular and steady weight throughout the autumn. It can be hard to tell if your horse is gaining or losing weight when you see them every day (especially if they are developing a thick winter coat), so get into the habit of using a weight tape (see the summer edition of Back in the Saddle on how to use one of these) regularly.

If your horse is prone to weight gain in the winter months, do not cut back on the feed. Rather switch to a low-calorie feed and supplement with a balancer, such as Vetrogut Probalance, to ensure your horse receives all the nutrients they need.

## Keeping hydrated

As the temperature drops, most horses will naturally drink less water than during the summer months. This is problematic as water is an important nutrient for all-round vitality, as well as playing an important role in helping the movement of foodstuffs through the gut.

Ensure your horse always has access to plenty of clean, fresh water and consider the following tips to encourage drinking:

- Provide warmer water to encourage drinking
- Add an additional water source with added electrolytes, such as Vetrolytes PLUS sachets
- Mix a little warm water with your horse's feeds

# Clipping essentials

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Autumn is the time when many horses are clipped. Is this the right option for your horse and what do you need to consider before clipping?

The horse's winter coat is designed to insulate against the elements. Anyone who has owned a hardy native breed will know how effective this woolly layer of protection is during our worst weather.

But for owners with horses in regular work this coat can be an inconvenience. Not only does an unclipped coat take longer to groom, but it will lead to your horse sweating excessively when working and then potentially catching a chill when cooling down.

## Reasons to clip:

- ✓ Helps your horse keep cool when working
- ✓ Minimises sweating and the chance of catching a chill
- ✓ Makes your horse look smart
- ✓ Reduces grooming time
- ✓ Encourages healthy and shiny coat growth for the spring and summer

## But remember:

- Clipping isn't suitable for horses who live out in the winter. Instead, ensure they have access to suitable field shelter. You may want to rug when the weather is both cold and wet, or to prevent rain scald, or if you have a veteran.
- A clipped horse will need careful management and thicker rugs when turned out. Removing the coat and natural grease from the skin will make an animal more vulnerable to the elements and problems such as rain scald and mud fever.

*As with anything being calm, positive and well prepared is key*



## Don't forget!

- The coat grows quickly during the autumn months, so expect to clip every three to four weeks
- The full clip should only be used for horses in heavy work

## Types of clip

So you have made the decision to clip your horse? Now you have to work out which type of clip is most suitable:

### Best for horses in heavy work

- ✓ Full clip (all the coat is removed)
- ✓ Hunter clip (all the coat is removed bar the legs and patch for the saddle)

### Best for horses turned out occasionally (during the day)

- ✓ Blanket clip (all the coat removed except for the legs and patch for an exercise sheet)
- ✓ Chaser clip (as above but with the coat kept on the neck to keep the muscles here warm)

### Best for horses turned out regularly (during the day)

- ✓ Trace clip (coat removed from the underside of the belly, chest and neck only)
- ✓ Irish clip (coat removed from the head, neck and behind the elbow)

### Best for horses turned out most of the time

- ✓ Bib clip (only the hair from the front of the neck and the chest is removed)

## Kit and preparation

Many horses enjoy being clipped and often doze off midway. However, it is important to remember that some animals will be nervous and some, especially young horses, will need time to build confidence and get used to the clippers.

Clipping is an art form and if you have never done it before consider getting an experienced friend to show you the ropes.

As with anything, being calm, positive and well prepared is key. Never embark on a clipping session if you are in a rush or stressed - your horse will pick up on this. Similarly, never lose patience and tell your horse off if they are anxious when being clipped. Rather, use short familiarisation sessions to build confidence.



## Clipping at-a-glance guide

### You'll need...

- ✓ To wear a riding hat for protection
- ✓ Rubber-soled boots as you will be working with electricity
- ✓ A friend to hold your horse's head
- ✓ A quiet and well-lit environment

### Your clippers should...

- ✓ Be in good working order. Have them serviced at least once a year
- ✓ Have the cables, blades and tensioning tested before clipping
- ✓ Have sharp blades. Oil them every 10 minutes as you clip
- ✓ Be attached to a circuit breaker for safety

### Help your horse by...

- ✓ Only clipping when clean and dry. If possible, bath them the day before
- ✓ Feeding beforehand to help them relax
- ✓ Mark your clip out on the coat with chalk to prevent mistakes
- ✓ Always turning your clippers on away from your horse
- ✓ Having a rug or blanket on hand to keep clipped areas warm





# Autumn ailments

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For many it is the best season of the year - crisp mornings, golden leaves and ground perfect for long canters. Make sure your horse enjoys autumn as much as you do with this essential healthcare checklist

✓ **Check your worming programme is targeted**

Once the heat of summer subsides, the number of infective parasite larvae on grazing rises sharply. In fact, in most areas, counts are at their highest during the autumn months. As such check with your vet that you are using the most effective deworming programme. At this time of year you should be protecting against tapeworm, encysted small redworm larvae and large redworm and bots. It is really important to use a targeted approach to worming because overuse of wormers is leading to parasitic resistance.

✓ **Be aware of the increased risk of laminitis**

While we may associate laminitis with the first flush of spring grass, there is also a spike in the autumn as grass grows again after the summer months. Some horses in particular are more likely to develop laminitis during the autumn months, such as veterans or those with insulin resistance. Remember, if a horse has had laminitis once, they are more likely to get it again. The key is to be prepared and remember that prevention is everything with laminitis. Consider restricting access to pasture by creating a grazing paddock or using a grazing muzzle.

✓ **Atypical Myopathy**


Fatal in 60-70% of horses, atypical myopathy is a disorder that damages the muscles and is more prevalent in the autumn. It is caused by eating the seeds and leaves of the sycamore tree and its onset is rapid and often unexpected. Regularly check your pasture for sycamore seeds and leaves and avoid letting your horse graze near sycamore trees in the autumn. If clearing the seeds and leaves is not possible, fence off areas where seeds and leaves fall.

✓ **Poisoning**

If grazing is sparse your horse may seek out other foodstuffs, some of which could be poisonous (see atypical myopathy above). One of the biggest dangers at this time of year is acorns, with some horses seeming to develop a real taste for them and actively seeking them out. While it would appear that some animals can eat them without any ill effects, for reasons not really understood, acorns can cause problems for some horses, leading to severe damage to the gastrointestinal system and kidneys. The safest course of action is to clear your field of acorns or to safely fence off areas where they fall.

✓ **Blackthorn injury**

With the return of the team chasing and hunting seasons, be mindful of blackthorns. Puncture wounds caused by blackthorns usually cause severe lameness and can be incredibly irritating - research suggests that this is caused by the high alkaloid levels present in the thorns. Although lameness is usually present, especially if the wound is around a joint, always take time to check your horse's legs if you have been near blackthorns as they can enter a limb and cause gradual swelling over time.

A photograph of three horses grazing in a lush green field. On the left is a white horse, in the middle is a dark brown horse, and on the right is a lighter brown horse. They are all facing left, grazing on the grass. In the background, there is a wooden fence and a line of trees.

*Regular feeding, improved management and reduction of stress are the key areas to focus on to prevent painful and debilitating ulcers*

## Understanding gastric ulcers

When considering the factors for good performance how often do you think about gastric health? The stomach plays a surprisingly large part in shaping behaviour and wellbeing, but our horse's lifestyles can play havoc with its natural function. Find out why this matters and what you can do to improve it

As we approach autumn our horse's diets are set to change. More time spent stabled, lower quality grazing and a change of routine all pose a challenge to digestion.

It only comprises 10% of the entire digestive system, but the stomach plays a key role, storing food and then breaking it down to allow it to pass through into the intestines.

The key difference between the equine stomach and ours is that it is constantly releasing gastric acid in anticipation of food. This is because the horse is a grazing animal, designed to be continually ingesting small amounts of food as it moves from place to place. Today's horses live in a very different world to their wild ancestors, with the performance horse facing a completely different lifestyle. Hours spent in a stable unable to roam, the stress of travelling to competitions and modern medications can all increase stomach acid levels and the health problems associated with this, most notably gastric ulcers.

### The stomach in numbers

**73**  
litres

Of gastric acid produced by the average horse in 24 hours

**9-18**  
litres

The capacity of the horse's stomach

**24**  
hours

The time in which a gastric ulcer can develop

**16-20**  
hours

Of the day spent grazing by horses in the wild

**15**  
minutes

Is all it can take for food to enter and exit the stomach



## What is a gastric ulcer?

A gastric ulcer is, at its simplest, damage to the lining of the stomach. Ulcers are caused when the stomach is empty, meaning gastric acid builds up and sloshes around the stomach, irritating the lining.

Ulcers are incredibly painful, meaning they have a real impact on wellbeing and behaviour. Although they are most prevalent in performance horses, with some studies suggesting that more than 90% of racehorses have them, research indicates that between 37-60% of leisure horses are affected too.

Whatever level your horse is competing at it is important to be aware of the risks of ulcers and to create a preventative strategy for dealing with them. We are not looking to eradicate gastric acid - as well as assisting in the breakdown of food, gastric acid is an important component of the immune system as the first line of defence against ingested microorganisms. Rather we are aiming to support the stomach for improved performance, calm behaviour, good appetite and a happy horse.

## Preventative steps

While the treatment for gastric ulcers has improved over the past decade, as with so many things, prevention is better than cure. Regular feeding, improved management and reduction of stress are the key areas to focus on:

**Regular feeding.** The equine stomach is not designed to be empty so ensure you feed little and often (ideally three to four meals a day) rather than one large concentrate feed. Fibre is essential, so feed good quality forage around the clock and consider feeding alfalfa, which with its high calcium content is known to be an effective buffer to stomach acid. Avoid high starch and sugar concentrate feeds in favour of a feed that provides a higher proportion of calories from oil and fibre.

**Improved management.** Not every horse can be out 24/7 and certainly not every performance horse, but offer as much turnout as possible to replicate natural behaviour. Never exercise or travel your horse on an empty stomach and find ways to encourage the stabled horse to eat for longer. Ideas include using two small-holed haynets rather than one large one and popping a restricter in your horse's bowl or manger to slow down eating.

**Reduce stress.** Any type of stress makes a horse more prone to ulcers. Ensure your horse has a routine that you stick to as much as possible and be mindful of situations that can cause stress, such as introducing a new field mate.

## Stop acid in its tracks

Reduce the risk of gastric ulcers and create a perfect pH balance with Vetrogut Acid Fix, the latest product from the Animalife range.



With a unique honeycomb structure - which research shows has an enhanced buffering (reduction) action on stomach acid - and made from calcareous marine red algae, Vetrogut Acid Fix:

- ✓ Creates the perfect pH for your horse to maintain gut balance and health
- ✓ Reduces the risk of acidosis and stomach ulceration
- ✓ Improves the rate of fibre digestion
- ✓ Reduces the risk of laminitis and bloating
- ✓ Improves consistency of droppings
- ✓ Breaks down slowly - conditioning your horse and neutralising significantly more acid, over a longer period

The result? A happy and comfortable horse!



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