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BarnManager Horse Health Series: Proper Hoof Care

Proper hoof health can be difficult to achieve at any time of year, especially during the months with higher temperatures and humidity. A solid, healthy hoof is even more difficult to attain in a warmer climate due to an increase in moisture in the environment. [Dr. Stephen O'Grady of Palm Beach Equine Clinic](#) in Wellington, FL, explains how moisture contributes to a weaker hoof infrastructure and offers steps owners and managers can take to help keep moisture away and strengthen horses' hooves.

We tend to use more water to keep horses cool when the temperatures are high, both at competitions and at home. In many areas of the country, the humidity levels also increase during this time of year, adding moisture to the air and preventing hooves from drying as quickly. What happens to a hoof with excess water is similar to what would happen to a wooden plank that's placed in a water trough: it becomes waterlogged, then softens and becomes weaker as a result.

It is best to tackle issues that accompany moisture by going straight to the source and minimizing the amount of water that comes in contact with the hooves. This can be accomplished in several ways:

1. Give your horse fewer baths

Cutting down on how many times per day a horse is hosed can be difficult with competition horses that need to stay clean and that may be exercised, ridden, or shown several times per day. Still, it is important to be strategic about using water, especially on the legs. At home, try to occasionally let your horse air dry in front of the fan if a bath isn't entirely necessary. Body clipping will help your horse's heat tolerance this time of year and you may not have to use the hose after every ride.

2. Avoid standing water

If you must bathe, be sure the horse isn't standing in excess water that rises over the hoof capsule. Try to shower off the horse in a dry area so the surface underneath the horse does not contribute to the moisture level. After being bathed, move the horse to a dry surface so their hooves can thoroughly dry.

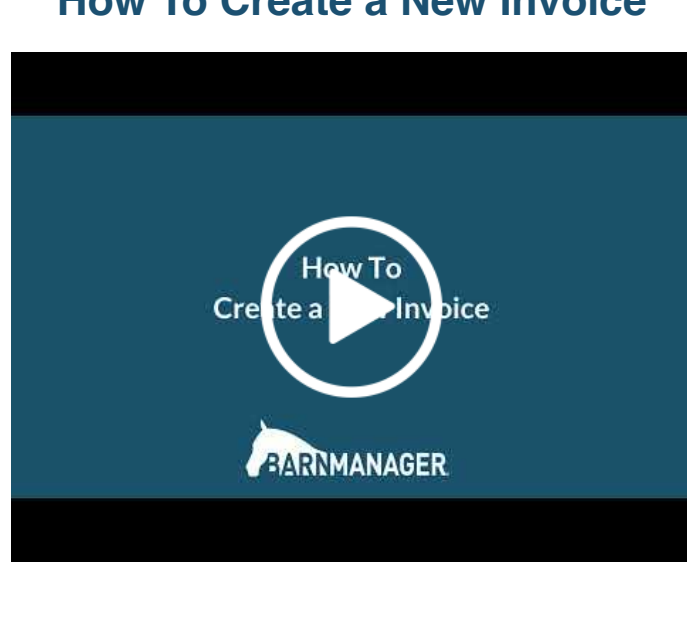
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TIP OF THE MONTH



Only brush or pick through a horse's tail when it is completely dry with a detangler in it. Brushing a wet tail can lead to breakage.

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Join BarnManager's Nicole Lakin and Dr. Tim Worden as they chat with leading equestrians and researchers to explore the fascinating science behind cutting-edge training and management techniques for sport horses. On this podcast, guests discuss recent research on topics relevant to ensuring sport horses achieve their best while staying healthy.

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