for the signs of frostbite. Provide shelter during severe weather. If you find your horse with any of the frigid temperatures for long stretches of time, warm water if you are concerned about his feet. They'd advise for animals with other types of wounds. You should get medical care immediately because of this infection risk. Vets also recommend tetanus vaccination, similar to what's recommended for humans. As described earlier, tissue that's dead due to frostbite must slough away or be surgically removed. “If you see a change in the skin color, you need to act immediately,” says Lohmann. “As the skin turns black, it can’t be revived.”

According to Lohmann, tissue in the extremities is the most at risk for frostbite. “If you expose an animal to a cold environment, the blood vessels in the extremities begin to constrict.” This leads to decreased blood flow, which can lead to tissue death. “If the circulation stops, the tissue is no longer able to maintain warmth. The extremities, like ears and tails, are particularly vulnerable to frostbite.”

According to Lohmann, horses are better adapted to cold weather than humans. “They can survive at temperatures as low as -40°F.” However, they are not immune to the effects of cold weather. “Horses need to be protected from the cold, just like any other animal.”

An animal in poor body condition has less insulation against the cold (no fat stores) and can have problems with hypothermia. “A horse that's up moving around is best,” says Lohmann. “Animals that are recumbent (unable to rise) for prolonged periods may be more at risk than a healthy horse,” says Lohmann. “A sick, weak individual in a cold environment is also at risk.”

Horses that are recumbent are more at risk for frostbite. “If they've become recumbent from illness or injury, they are at risk for hypothermia,” says Lohmann. “They are unable to generate enough body heat to keep warm.”

There's not much that can be done once tissue cells die. If you and your vet suspect frostbite and it's too late to get medical care, you can try to keep the affected area warm. “You can wrap the area in warm blankets or use a heat lamp,” says Lohmann. “However, this is not a reliable method of treatment.”

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