



Horse Breather

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Seasonal ailments – when to start and end Equine Breathing

A horse showing seasonal symptoms is over breathing, but the same horse is still over breathing even during the season when the symptoms are not present.

Ailments such as sweet itch, hay fever, head shaking and COPD are often seasonal in occurrence. They start up in the spring when the weather warms up and as triggers such as midges and pollen arrive.

The owner sees that the change to warmer weather and initiation of associated triggers cause the horse's symptoms. But often they also assume that in winter, when no symptoms are present, the horse is fine.

Owners of horses with seasonal breathing difficulties, have told me that their horse's breathing is 'good' in winter. But this is not the case.

A horse that shows any seasonal symptoms such as sweet itch or COPD, is unlikely to be fine at times when the symptoms are not active. A look at the nostrils will reveal that the horse is over breathing*.

The over breathing is probably less than when the symptoms are active, but still enough to compromise the horse's physiology. A horse with physiology that is not working properly is quicker to succumb to over breathing triggers and develop symptoms.

Winter is a good time to start Equine Breathing because it gives the horse a chance to improve their breathing and therefore physiology, before conditions worsen and breathing triggers intensify.

That doesn't mean that it's not worth starting Equine Breathing in the spring or summer when symptoms are already at their height. Equine Breathing often starts to reduce symptoms quite quickly and so can bring relief. However it may be necessary to continue Equine Breathing through the following winter and as long as is necessary to regain **normal breathing*** (see below for how to recognise normal breathing).

It's very important **not to stop** Equine Breathing as soon as the symptoms have disappeared and that goes for **any** symptoms, not just seasonal ones. Because again, a **lack** of symptoms does not necessarily mean that the breathing (and therefore physiology) has returned to normal*.

Until the horse has regained normal breathing it will be susceptible to over breathing triggers and the breathing could deteriorate to the point of having symptoms again.

Equine Breathing should be continued until normal breathing has been regained and the horse no longer over breathes in any conditions.

*How to recognise over breathing

A normal nostril is slit shaped with no thick edges. When the horse is at rest, there is no perceptible movement of the nostril to indicate when the horse is breathing in or out, or audible sound of air going in or out



Dilated nostril of pony with COPD symptoms (wheezing and heaves)



After 4 weeks of Equine Breathing, the pony no longer has symptoms. The nostril is less flared but still enlarged and round because the pony is still over breathing.



A more normal slit like nostril with no movement during the in or out breath and no audible sound of breathing

When a horse over breathes the nostril is wide and round (dilated). The edges of the nostril may be thickened. At rest, the nostril moves with each in and out breath. It flares on the in breath and there is often an audible sound of air going into and out of the nostril.

The contents of this ezine are not a substitute for veterinary advice. If the reader has any concerns they should seek independent professional advice from a vet.

