First Winter Survival Guide

Don't panic. Here is what you actually need for your first winter. Tick it off as you go.

01 For you

Function over fashion. Give yourself a break.

- [ ] **Head torch**
  Rechargeable is best. Most come with a USB charger you can plug in the car on the way to and from the yard.
- [ ] **Gloves**
  You can never have too many. Buy a pack of work gloves for yard jobs and keep your nice riding gloves for riding and lungeing.
- [ ] **Hat**
  Personal choice, but a few beanies for different temperatures means a spare while a wet one dries.
- [ ] **Waterproof coat**
  It doesn't have to be expensive. A Dry Robe or Equi Dry style coat is good on a budget, and a ski coat fits well and won't make you sweat.
- [ ] **Waterproof footwear**
  Have a selection: wellies plus a pair of short waterproof boots. Buy the best wellies you can afford, or buy cheap and expect to replace them in a year.

Keep all your gear together in a bag or box, somewhere dry, in the car or at the yard.

02 For your horse

Easier than you think, once you know what yours likes.

- [ ] **Waterproofed, winter-ready rugs**
  Get your turnout rugs ready now. Start the season with freshly washed and waterproofed rugs, or a new one.
- [ ] **Exercise sheet**
  Essential if you plan to ride in winter. If you can only have one, try to find an original Witney Wool Newmarket blanket.
- [ ] **Mud busting brush**
  For getting mud off the awkward places. Most horses tolerate it well, and it earns its place in your grooming kit.
- [ ] **Stable ball**
  Good for any horse, especially when they spend more time in the stable over winter.
- [ ] **Towels**
  Bog-basic towels for drying legs or faces when de-mudding. Buy in bulk online so you never run out of clean ones.

Learn what your horse likes. Plenty run hot and don't need heavy rugging, even when clipped.

03 For the yard

Cover these five areas and you will be fine.

My set-up: ☐ DIY livery ☐ Full livery ☐ My own yard

It changes what you need.

☐ **Forage**
Enough for the winter, or a plan for how you will secure it.

☐ **A safe, covered, well-lit area**
For farrier work, grooming and taking up. Don't panic if you don't have this, just make the best of what you have.

☐ **Mucking out tools**
For the stable or the field, whatever works best for you. Try a few forks if you can, then buy the one you like.

☐ **Water supply**
Is it well lagged, just in case it gets cold?

☐ **An exercise plan**
Think about your options. Some people give their horses the winter off, which is a solid plan if you don't have a floodlit arena, a horse walker and safe, dry, off-road hacking.

My winter plan

Forage plan:

Exercise plan:

My vet's number (call them first in any emergency):

Don't be afraid to ask for help

Most first-time owners tell me the hardest part of winter isn't any one job. It's the not knowing. Get straight-talking, black and white advice with no jargon and no judgement.

First Winter Chat
£10
A 15 minute video call. We go through your set-up, your horse, your worries and your top priorities, so you leave knowing exactly where to start.

Winter Help
£45
Advice tailored to you, a video call of up to an hour each month, and WhatsApp support with replies within 48 hours.

Whole Winter
£120
Three months of Winter Help, from 1st November to the end of January or 1st December to the end of February.

£10 discount on either winter package when you sign up within 7 days of your First Winter Chat. Email **ria@adventuresinblackandwhite.co.uk** to book.

Want the all-year basics? **The Simple Guide to Horse Care** is on Amazon: amzn.eu/d/09T60QcP

My advice is based on my experience and equine science qualifications. It doesn't replace your vet. For any health concern or