Winter walk-round checklist

Prepping for winter | Adventures in Black and White

Yard or horse: _____ **Date checked:** _____

Don't Panic!
Walk your set-up with this list and a pen. Tick what is done and circle what needs doing. You do not have to do it all in one go. Pick the **three jobs** that would cause you the biggest problem if left, do those first, and let the rest follow.

1. Daylight and safety

- ☐ **Torches and head torches** work, with spare batteries or a charged backup.
- ☐ **Yard and gateway lighting** works. Check bulbs, switches and timers.
- ☐ **Hi-vis and reflective kit** for you and your horse if you will be out in poor light.
- ☐ **First aid kit** (human and equine) is stocked and in date.
- ☐ **Vet's number, out-of-hours number and yard address** are saved in your phone and written by the phone or door.
- ☐ **Fire safety:** extinguishers in date, hay and bedding stored safely away from stables where you can.

2. Ground, gateways and fencing

- ☐ **Spot the problem areas:** which gateways, tracks and field corners poach first? Mark them now.
- ☐ **Hardcore, stone or mats** down before the ground is wet, not after.
- ☐ **Move feeders and water troughs** off wet ground, and plan to move them again if it churns up.
- ☐ **Fencing and gates:** posts firm, hinges and latches working, no loose wire or fallen branches.
- ☐ **Drainage:** ditches, drains and gutters clear so water has somewhere to go.

3. Grazing and fields

- ☐ **Estimate how much grass you have left** and how long it will last.
- ☐ **Decide on a winter turnout area** (a sacrifice area, if you can) to protect the rest of your land.
- ☐ **Rest or section off fields** before they are churned up, so they recover for spring.
- ☐ **Toxic plants and trimmings:** check for yew, and clear hedge cuttings or fallen branches from grazing.

4. Forage and feed

- ☐ **Work out how much forage you use per week** (weigh a bale or net), then multiply up to spring.
- ☐ **Order forage now** if you need more. It is easier and often cheaper before everyone else is looking.
- ☐ **Check quality:** no mould, dust or musty smell, and a good dry storage place off the ground.
- ☐ **Hard feed and supplements:** check stock and use-by dates, and review whether each is still needed.
- ☐ **Body condition:** score your horse and take photos now as a baseline, then recheck monthly.

5. Shelter and water

- ☐ **Shelter:** can your horse get out of the wind and rain? Check field shelters, windbreaks, roofs and doors.
- ☐ **Stables:** no leaks, drainage working, and good ventilation. Do not shut them up tight.
- ☐ **Water:** have a plan for frozen troughs, and remove ice at least twice a day. Horses must never go without water.
- ☐ **Pipes and taps:** lag exposed pipes, and know where your stopcock is.
- ☐ **Spare buckets** in case a trough or tap fails.

General guidance only. It does not replace advice from your vet.

6. Rugs and kit

- ☐ **Check every rug:** repairs, washing and reproofing done before you need them.
- ☐ **Check fit** for rubs, especially shoulders, and for straps and buckles that are worn.
- ☐ **Rug for the horse in front of you:** think about condition, age, clip and shelter, not just the temperature.
- ☐ **Enough rugs to rotate** so there is always a dry one ready.
- ☐ **Your own kit:** waterproofs, spare gloves, warm layers, boots that cope with mud.

7. Health checks

- ☐ **Farrier** booked, and ask about mud, abscess and wet-weather foot care.
- ☐ **Dental check** in date.
- ☐ **Worming plan** agreed with your vet or SQP, ideally based on tests, including a winter plan.
- ☐ **Vaccinations and passport** in date and easy to find.
- ☐ **Daily checks** of legs and skin for mud fever and rain scald, and keep legs as dry as you can.
- ☐ **Older horses, horses in work and broodmares:** ask your vet whether they need a different winter plan.

8. Your routine and back-up

- ☐ **Plan the dark mornings and evenings** so the routine is realistic after work.
- ☐ **A back-up person** who can cover if you are ill or cannot get to the yard.
- ☐ **Contacts list:** vet, farrier, feed merchant, someone with a tractor or 4x4, a friend nearby.
- ☐ **Winter yard diary:** note what works and what does not, so next year is easier.
- ☐ **Clocks go back.** Re-set your feed and turnout times to suit the new light, and change them gradually for your horse.

My top three jobs this week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Want a hand with winter?

I offer one-to-one winter support, from a 15 minute video call to help all the way through to spring. Find out more at **adventuresinblackandwhite.co.uk** or email **ria@adventuresinblackandwhite.co.uk**. Looking for the all-year basics? *The Simple Guide to Horse Care* is available on Amazon: amzn.eu/d/09T60QcP

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