

# Veterinary Connections



News about Animal Health, Food Safety, and One Health  
Army Public Health Center

2019

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## Caring for Your Horse in Cold Weather

> Content contributed by MAJ Jessica J. Huwa, DVM, Army Medical Department Center & School

The cool days of autumn have passed and winter has arrived! Along with stockpiling firewood, winterizing the house, and staging snow shovels, this is the time to make sure your horse is ready for the change in temperature. Cold temperatures can negatively affect your horse's health if you are not prepared. The following are some important equine care tips for horse owners.

### Feed, Water, & Exercise

Monitoring your horse's diet, water intake, and exercise is important to avoid health problems during the winter. Impaction colic is a health concern more common in colder months. It is caused by a blockage of the large intestine when feed material builds up in the narrowed areas of the bowel. Providing free access to quality hay versus increasing grain during very cold temperatures is highly recommended, especially if your horse is pastured. Feeding hay is the best way to keep your horse warm. Hay is digested in the large intestine which generates heat and helps to increase the horse's core temperature. Feeding high quality hay that is easier to digest also decreases the chance for colic. Water intake is especially important in avoiding impaction colic during the winter since dehydration can alter normal digestion. Make sure an ice-free water source is easily accessible at all times. Keeping outside

water sources in sunny locations or using a warming device helps keep it free of ice and encourages horses to drink more. Do not rely on snow as a water source for your horse! Snow never provides enough water and it actually causes your horse to expend more energy to consume. Exercising your horse is also beneficial to preventing colic because physical activity aids in the movement of food within the digestive tract. Including mild to moderate physical activity in any horse's cold weather routine is recommended. If your horse does not need shoes for performance reasons, consider removing them in the winter season to allow better footing on snow and ice.

### Blankets & Appropriate Shelter

Horses pastured outdoors on a routine basis will grow a winter coat capable of keeping them warm. Outdoor blankets should be made of breathable, waterproof material and should only be used for horses that have short, clipped coats or have been recently worked in cold weather. Keep in mind that stable blankets are not appropriate for outdoor use during the winter. Also, using blankets on horses that have grown winter coats can actually decrease their ability to stay warm.

>> CONT. ON PAGE TWO



## Caring for Your Horse in Cold Weather

>> CONT. FROM PAGE ONE

Providing appropriate shelter is far more important to keeping your horse warm and dry! Rain, sleet, snow, and windy conditions will disrupt a horse's natural insulating layer, leading to decreased body temperatures and a reluctance to move around. Ensure your horse has an available shelter that is enclosed on at least three sides with a leak-free roof, which will provide a barrier to wind and any precipitation.

### Foal Care in the Cold

Although many mares foal (give birth) in the late spring and summer months, some mares may foal in the winter. If your mare is due in the winter months, ensure they do not foal outside where

frigid temperatures can be deadly to a newborn. Foaling stalls should be heavily padded with straw and any wet or soiled bedding should be removed each day. Once your foal has arrived, they will greatly benefit from fresh air and exercise, even if it's cold outside. Make sure they are kept warm with a foal or calf blanket during all cold temperature outings (calf blankets may be cheaper and more available in your area). If your barn is not heated, consider using a stable blanket while indoors. Make sure the blanket is monitored for wet or soiled areas and remove it to inspect the foal several times a week.

**Following these helpful tips can keep your horse healthy and keep you both riding all year long.**



## The Human Animal Bond

### The many ways animals can help people

> Content contributed by MAJ Taylor Opel, 64B Public Health Cadre, Fort Benning FYGVE

Animals can be used to enhance therapy for a variety of medical and emotional purposes. There are many different ways that an animal can help, from simply providing comfort to a child to helping a patient recover from a stroke. Knowing the different definitions of Human Animal Bond interactions can help determine if an animal and what type of animal may be useful in a particular setting.

### Types of Animal Interactions

#### Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA)



Informal interactions that provide comfort and help relieve the stress of participants. Children's reading programs, college visits during finals, and visits to shelters after a disaster are all AAAs. In the military, activities can include visits to veteran's nursing homes and military hospitals.

#### Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI)

Intervention that intentionally includes an animal as part of the therapeutic process. They are goal oriented and structured. Those conducting AAI must be trained on using animals with their patients.

##### Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)



Structured intervention with deliberate use of an animal in a treatment plan. AAT involves a licensed therapist who guides interactions between a patient and an animal to reach specific goals. In the military, AAT can be used to help those with PTSD during counseling sessions, and can assist physical therapy goals of wounded warriors.

##### Animal Assisted Education (AAE)



Conducted by a qualified teacher in an educational setting. AAE is formal, goal oriented, and structured. This intervention assists in improved cognitive functioning, academic goals, and social skills. In the military, AAE can be used to help Service member's children who have learning disabilities.

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## Excessive Barking in Dogs




> Content contributed by MAJ Desiree R. Broach, MS, DVM, DACVB, Veterinary Medical Center, Europe





Barking is a normal communication tool for dogs and can occur for a variety of reasons. The behavior becomes problematic for owners, however, when it becomes excessive, easily triggered, and difficult to stop. A few reasons why dogs bark include:

- Alert or Territorial Barking
- Attention-Seeking, Soliciting
- Fear or Anxiety-Induced Barking
- Learned or Conditioned Barking; Working Behavior
- Lack of Physical and Mental Stimulation
- Medical or Behavioral Illness
- Play Barking

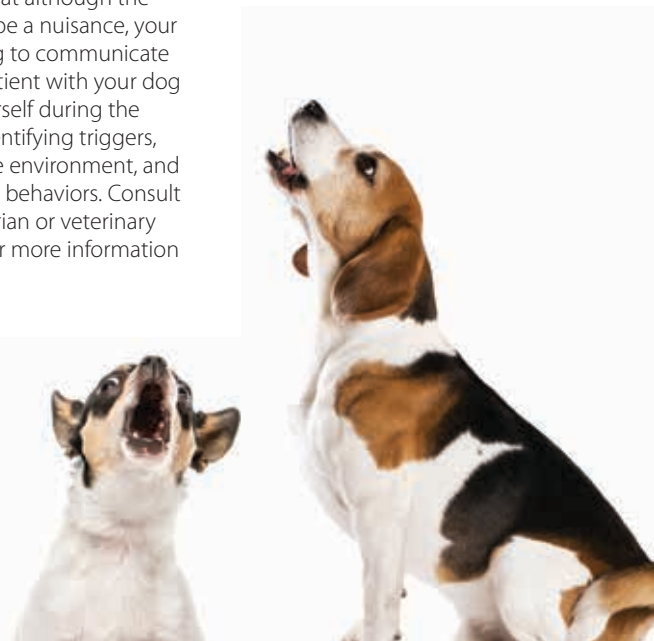
Take these steps to manage excessive barking:

-  **Determine the triggers for the barking** by writing down the details of the situations in which your dog will bark excessively. Dogs can hear and smell much better than humans, so there may be triggers that we cannot easily detect. Also annotate when the barking began, because recent changes in daily schedule or environment may be a cause for barking too.
-  **Discuss the details of the barking** with your veterinarian. A veterinarian can determine if a medical issue could be causing the barking, or making it worse, and can ensure that canine- and breed-specific needs have been addressed. Pain or illness can reduce your dog's tolerance and cause changes in behavior, as can a lack of exercise, or environmental enrichment, so this is an important step! Keep in mind that barking is only a symptom. Although the cause may be relatively simple (e.g., learned behavior, alert barking), it can also be one component to a more complex behavioral disorder, such as separation anxiety, fear-based aggression, noise phobias, and cognitive dysfunction. These disorders must be addressed and treated before focusing on managing the barking.
-  **Management of excessive barking** includes removing triggers and any associated reinforcement for the behavior. As the owner, your response (such as yelling) can inadvertently reinforce and increase barking, even when you think you are punishing the behavior. Removal of or avoiding triggers will depend on where the barking occurs (e.g., at home or in public). Examples can include: preventing visual access to windows at the front of the

house; using music or white noise to mask trigger noises; and going on walks during low-traffic times of day. If triggers cannot be removed in certain situations, pair a high-value reward with them, such as a treat or toy, to create positive associations.

-  **The next step is to desensitize your dog to the triggers and reward quiet behavior.** Desensitization is using the trigger at a low enough volume (e.g., soft knocking at the door) or at a far enough distance (e.g., from people or dogs), so that you can reward the dog for not barking. Provide a distracting activity, such as a food-containing toy, for positive association and to make the act of barking more difficult to perform at the same time. Gradually, the intensity of the trigger can be increased (i.e., increasing sound of a door knock, or decreasing the distance between people/dogs), if the dog continues to offer quiet behavior and is not distressed.
-  **The final step is to teach a new behavior**, also known as counter-conditioning. Teaching your dog to go to a mat when there is a knock at the door, to sit or 'target' an object when people/dogs are walking by, or to work on a food puzzle during storms, will provide your dog with a positive and predictable activity to rehearse instead of barking.

Remember that although the barking may be a nuisance, your dog is barking to communicate a need. Be patient with your dog and with yourself during the process of identifying triggers, modifying the environment, and teaching new behaviors. Consult your veterinarian or veterinary behaviorist for more information or assistance.



# What do the dates on your food products really mean?

> Content contributed by WO1 Evan Lund, Food Safety Officer, Veterinary Services and Public Health Sanitation Directorate, Army Public Health Center

There are many misconceptions about what the date on your carton of milk, jar of mayonnaise, and most other food products really means. The average American consumer often checks the date on foods in their kitchen and looks at the calendar only to realize that it is past the “use by” or “best before” date. Your initial instinct is often to immediately throw it away. However, the reality is that you could be wasting perfectly good food and your hard earned dollars. Foods older than the product dating may lose quality factors, such as color and flavor, but still remain safe for consumption. There is a distinct difference between the safety and quality of a food product. What is a safe food? The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) states that a safe food is one that has little to no potential to cause a foodborne illness if consumed. Quality refers to any characteristics of a food product, such as color or flavor, which does not result in illness.

Food product dating is not required by federal regulations, with the exception of infant formula

and some baby foods. The dates on products are in place to assist retailers and consumers in determining when the product is of optimal quality. The chart below provides a brief explanation of some of the industry terms you may see on food products that you purchase at the base commissary or your local supermarket.

Just following the dates on food products is not good enough. Food products require proper handling and storage to prevent rapid growth of naturally occurring spoilage organisms such as bacteria, molds, and yeasts. Following instructions on the manufacturer’s label, such as “Refrigerate after Opening”, will ensure the product meets or exceeds its intended shelf-life. The most important practice is to make certain that refrigerated or frozen foods are properly stored as soon as possible. At the end of the day, a good old fashioned smell test can be a reliable indicator of whether food is spoiled. If it doesn’t look, smell, or taste right, don’t eat it! When in doubt, throw it out.

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“Best if Used By/Before”	Indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
“Sell-By”	Tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.
“Use-By”	The last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. <b>It is not a safety date except for when used on infant formula or some baby foods.</b>
“Expires On”	It is recommended that the product not be consumed after this date is exceeded. This label is not used commonly but may be seen on infant formula and baby foods.

(www.fsis.usda.gov)



## Veterinary Connections

Goal of publication:

- Veterinary Connections is a quarterly publication written by Army Veterinary Service personnel and published by the Army Public Health Center to inform and educate Service members, beneficiaries, and retirees about Animal Health, Food Safety, and One Health.
- One Health refers to the intersection and overlap between animals, humans, and the environment.
- Army Veterinary Service personnel serve around the world supporting the Department of Defense as proponents for Animal Health and Food Protection.

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