

Four Ways to Save Money on Horse Care



The current economic situation has most folks looking for ways that they can save money wherever they can. When it comes to taking care of your horse, of course, you don't want to trying to save money to turn into substandard care. Nevertheless, there are probably some things that you can do to help ease the financial commitment that comes with taking care of a horse.

There are certain things that you have to do for your horse. You're going to have to feed him, get his feet cared for, and, occasionally, address some important health concerns. While taking care of all of these needs is important for your horse's health – and it's a lot cheaper to take care of a healthy horse than it is to take care of a sick one – there are probably some things that you can do in each area to save a few dollars.

1. WEIGH YOUR FEED



A simple scale can help you reduce the amount of hay you feed your horse

If you feed your horse yourself, you probably throw measure your feed in units such as “flakes,” “quarts,” or “coffee cans.” Nutritionists are much more precise. [In fact, they have calculated that most normal adult horses need something along the lines of 1.5 – 2% of their body weight in feed per day.](#) For a 1000 pound horse (a normal-sized quarterhorse), that comes to about 15 – 20 pounds of feed per day to maintain ideal body condition (where you can feel the horse's ribs easily, but not see them).

Feed more hay than your horse needs and one of two things usually happens: either the additional hay gets wasted (as bedding, or as a fun toy), or the horse gets fat. So, rather than waste feed, why not weigh it before you feed it, using a simple scale? You'll most likely find that your horse will stay in good shape, you'll reduce wastage, you'll feed a consistent amount of feed (which helps prevent colic), and you'll save some money on feed, too.

2. CUT OUT THE SUPPLEMENTS

The fact is that horses are designed to live on some pretty simple stuff. In the wild (“natural” conditions, as it were), horses thrive on coarse grasses and water. Their bodies get everything that they need from such a diet: all of the vitamins, minerals, amino acids, etc. However, many horse owners seem to feel that their horse couldn't possibly be healthy without a veritable smorgasbord of [“important” supplements, designed to improve digestion, prevent arthritis, provide extra vitamins, etc., etc.](#)



In fact, most such supplements do horses little – if any – good. For example, there's essentially no research to support the use of the various joint supplements; there's virtually no reason to believe that any of them do what they say they'll do. Or, take vitamin and mineral

supplements (please). They provide very small amounts of most vitamins and minerals – if horses did have deficiencies, most of these supplements don't provide enough to correct the deficiency anyway. To keep your horse healthy, concentrate on giving good quality feed, in appropriate amounts (horses that exercise heavily *do* need extra feed), providing fresh, clean water, and regular exercise.

3. SHOE YOUR HORSE WHEN IT *NEEDS* TO BE SHOD



[There's no preset shoeing schedule that works for every horse.](#)

Horses' hooves – like people's fingernails – grow at their own pace. There's no reason for every horse to get shod every six weeks, or even at *any* set interval. Work with your farrier to determine how quickly your horse's hooves grow, and trim them on a schedule that's appropriate for your horse. Measure the length of your horse's front hooves from the coronary band to the toe, and keep track. Most horses grow only about 1/8 to 1/4 inch per month. If your horse is a slow grower, don't get his feet trimmed too often. Over time, too frequent trimming can lead to feet that are excessively short; short feet can get easily bruised, or can cause lameness on their own.

4. CUT BACK ON DEWORMING

Turn your nose up at the thought of excessive deworming

Yes, [internal parasites can cause problems for your horse if they are unchecked.](#) But the fact is that most horses that live in the stables that are in the desert that is southern California have little opportunity to

acquire internal parasites. Such horses usually don't commune with other horses in pasture (where parasite eggs can be more easily transmitted via lush grasses), they aren't exposed to other horse's manure, and even their own manure is regularly cleaned. There's simply no reason whatsoever to deworm your horse every few weeks if there's no significant parasite exposure. In addition, not only is the practice of needless deworming a waste of money, it also helps create parasite resistance to dewormers, which is becoming a problem throughout the world.



If you're concerned as to your horse's parasite status, give a call to your veterinarian and ask him or her to perform a fecal examination. If there is a

parasite burden in your horse, a fecal examination will often (but not always) demonstrate parasite eggs. Save some money by giving medication – *any* medication – only when needed.