

Horse Care Level 1 115 Principles of putting on and taking off horse rugs by Morgan Jones

1.1 State the potential hazards when using rugs with leg straps

Safety of horse and handler, climatic conditions

Attach the belly straps in the arrangement—crossed under the belly or not—as directed by the manufacturer. Deviating from the manufacturer's recommendations risks leaving dangerous gaps that a hoof can slip through or stressing the fabric, which can lead to tearing. If you are unsure of how to attach the straps, contact the manufacturer to confirm the intended arrangement.

Make sure the blanket itself fits. A blanket that is too large or too small will be pulled out of position, taking any straps with it. Remember that straps cannot compensate for an ill-fitting blanket. Adjust the straps properly. Make sure belly straps hang no more than four inches below the horse and you can slip no more than a single mittened hand between the chest strap and your horse. Larger gaps risk hoof entrapment when the horse lies down. Straps that are too tight will not only be uncomfortable for the horse, but can tear fabric. Consider forgoing the hind leg straps. Straps that pass around a horse's hind legs pose the greatest entanglement risk. If your horse's blanket stays put without these straps, you may want to remove them entirely.

Leg straps can become tangled if they are too loose and can restrict the horses movement if they are tight.

The handler is also at risk when doing the horses leg straps up and could potentially get kicked by the horse. Extra care must be taken and you should never stand at the back of a horse when doing leg straps, instead stand to the side.

<https://equusmagazine.com/horse-care/strap-safety-54853/>

1.2 Give the reasons for ensuring the rugs are applied correctly

Comfort, safety of horse and handler

The most important thing when considering your horse's comfort is to ensure the turnout rug fits correctly. If the rug is too small, it will lead to rubbing, and if it is too big and can slip, it can cause a safety hazard.

Like all horse rugs designed for prolonged use, a turnout rug needs to be securely fitted to the horse's body in order to provide effective protection and reduce the risk of it causing an accident in the field.

A turnout rug will have:

- A front closure - usually a single or double strap, buckle or clip system that fastens at the chest. There are also various types of closure used to fasten the necks on Combo or Detachable neck turnout rugs, but a popular choice is touch tape (Velcro).
- Surcingles - adjustable straps that hold the rug in place on the horse's body. These can be 'straight' or 'crossed' under the belly - 'crossed' are normally better at preventing the rug from slipping.
- Legs straps - elasticated and adjustable straps that go between the horse's legs and then loop back around and attach to the back of the rug to keep the rear of the rug in place; especially handy when the horse rolls.
- A fillet string (also called a tail cord) - a cord attached to either side at the back of the rug which the tail is pulled through. This is sometimes used instead of leg straps but won't prevent the rug from slipping as effectively if the horse rolls.

<https://www.horsemart.co.uk/community/equestrian-advice-guides/beginners-advice/horse-rugs-guide-different-types-of-rug-and-when-to-use-them>

1.3 State the procedure to follow if rugs slip

Ask for help. Safely put your horses head collar on so that your horse cannot move whilst you adjust his rug. Ask someone to hold the horse for you. Undo all of the buckles and surcingles and safely remove the rug in the correct way. Put the rug back on and tighten up any of the buckles to avoid slipping again. You may want to change the rug as if it keeps on slipping it is possibly too big for the horse.

<https://www.weatherbeeta.com.au/how-fit-your-rug/>

1.4 State how to apply and remove the horse rug

Putting the rug on

- Put a head collar on and tie up your horse securely

- Check that the front straps or buckles are undone and that the leg straps are secured back to themselves so that they don't swing round and hit the horse's legs or belly
- Gently place the rug on his back. Horses that are used to rugs, are not frightened when the rug is thrown up and over their back but this may not so with a young or difficult horse especially if it's for the first time. So, go slowly just in case!
- Position the rug so that it sits forward, in front of the wither.
- Fasten the chest straps. The top chest strap should be fastened to the first or second hole. If you are using the third hole or more, it may suggest the horse may need a larger rug size.
- Check the fit at the front by sliding your hand down inside the neck of the rug once it's fastened.
- Adjust the surcingle straps that go under his belly. Use the sliding adjustment bars on the surcingle straps to make them longer or shorter as needed. They should be an even length and should create an even cross or 'x' in the centre of the horse's belly.
- Check the fit of the surcingle straps. There should be hand's width between the straps and belly.
- Fasten the leg straps if the rug has them: pass the left-hand strap around the left hind leg and fasten it back on itself on the left side. Then pass the right hand one around the right hind leg, loop it through the left strap, and fasten it back on itself on the right-hand side.
- Check the fit of the leg straps. Once again there should be hand's width between the leg straps and the horse's thigh to allow for movement.
- Stand away from your horse once you think you've finished just to check that everything is done up that should be done up and everything's in the right place.
- Give your horse an encouraging pat to say well done and thank you for standing nicely!

Taking the rug off

- Put a head collar on and tie up your horse securely
- Unfasten the chest straps.
- Unfasten the surcingle straps under the horses belly.
- Unfasten the leg straps or lift horses tail over the fillet string.
- Place left hand at the top of the rug on the horses neck and the right hand just above the tail guard.
- With one swoop, remove the rug by lifting and then dragging off to the right towards the horses backend.

<https://www.equus.co.uk/blogs/community/how-to-put-on-a-horses-rug>

1.5 State how to fold and store rugs

How to fold rugs

Start with the blanket, unbuckled on your horse, or lying on the ground or floor. On the ground lay the blanket so the outside is facing up. Spread the straps out straight so they can be folded into the blanket as you go.

Fold the back 1/3 of the blanket up towards the center. Tuck the leg straps in and fold in the tail flap if there is one.

Fold the front 1/3 of the blanket back towards the folded edge. Straighten out any shoulder gussets.

Fold the right side up so the lower edge meets the center seam (or center in an un-seamed blanket).

Fold the left side up so the lower edge meets the center, folding up the belly straps.

Fold the two halves together. The bundle can now be folded together another time and packed in a trunk or bag for storage.

<https://www.gohorse.com.au/folding-a-rug.html>

Reverse the order of the folds and you'll be able to easily put the blanket back on the horse.

How to store rugs

Once your rugs are clean, dry, waterproofed and mended it is important you store them away in the correct way. Throwing them in the corner of a messy tack room will not really suffice. Always make sure that rugs are fully dry before storing them away. Otherwise, you will find they will become mouldy very quickly. Investing in a dry bin or trunk ideally with a lid to store your rugs is ideal. Always ensure your rugs are stored in a dry, mould free environment.

<https://www.theeverydayequestrian.co.uk/how-to-take-care-of-your-horses-winter-rugs-are-you-prepared/>

1.6 State the types of problems which may occur and to whom they should reported

- Horses may be either too hot or too cold if they do not have the correct rug on. Always check the weather temperature and ask someone first to make sure you are putting the correct rug on.
- Leg straps, surcingles etc can become tangled if they are too long for the horse. Always check the straps are tight enough first and get a supervisor or manager to double check for you.
- A horse could become spooked whilst putting the rug on. Always make sure that the horse is tied up securely in an appropriate place and use the correct methods for taking off and putting on rugs. Ask someone to hold the horse for you if you are worried.
- Rugs may become damaged. Never put a damaged rug on a horse and report straight away to the manager if you notice and holes or damage to the buckles or straps.
- The rug gets too big or too small for the horse. Get your manager to have a look for you if you think that the rug looks too big or too small.

<https://www.oakhill-vets.com/dangers-over-rugging/>

2.1 State safety precautions to be taken whilst putting on and taking off horse rugs

Procedure, PPE, security of horse and handler

Ensure the rug is clean (remove any spiders or rubbish on the inside)

Make sure the rug is a good fit and in reasonable condition (will it really protect your horse in bad weather? If it doesn't fit, it will rub and do damage!)

Does your horse actually need a rug? (Is it involved in showing/it is old or sick/does it have no shelter/is it experiencing extreme conditions)

Is it used to being rugged? (Its first experience may be traumatic and needs an experienced horseperson to manage it)

Be careful not to startle the horse when putting on or removing a rug. Make all your movements slow and gentle and make the horse aware of your presence before attempting to put on a rug, fasten belly or leg straps, or remove a rug.

- Rugs come in different designs, with different straps and fasteners. Familiarise yourself with the type of rug you are going to use before applying it to the horse.
- Wear suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with horses e.g. safety boots and a hard hat.
- Approach a horse from the near side (the horse's left); this is an equine convention and therefore horses are used to such an approach.
- When moving around the horse (e.g. to fasten a strap, to check the rug on the other (far) side) do not walk under the horse's neck and never walk behind the horse – this is dangerous.

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/vetscience/documents/clinical-skills/Rugging%20up%20a%20Horse.pdf>