

MINNESOTA– Hay Intake of Blanketed & Non-Blanketed Horses

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Thermoregulation in the horse is an energy-expensive process, which can be mitigated by blanketing horses in cold climates, potentially preventing weight loss or leading to decreased feed intake.

The objective of a recently published research project, conducted at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, was to evaluate feed intake, body weight, and body condition scores in blanketed and non-blanketed horses.

Starting in October, 16 adult horses were either blanketed (n=8) or not blanketed (n=8). From December through January, data was collected, including body weight, body condition scores, hay nutritive value, and round bale weights. Round bales were offered continuously to the horses, and hay waste and any remaining hay were weighed to calculate horse dry matter intake.

Average bale weight, forage nutritive value, body weight, and body condition scores were not different between blanketed and non-blanketed horses. However, the daily dry matter intake was different. Blanketed horses consumed 2.3% of their body weight, while non-blanketed horses consumed 2.5% of their body weight. These results suggest blanketed horses conserve energy, leading to decreased feed intake.

For more information on this research, read the article in the *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science* ([sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0737080620303300](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0737080620303300)).