

THE NORTHWEST HORSE SOURCE



Your All Breed, All Discipline
Educational Resource

Presents

BUDGET-WISE HORSEKEEPING TIPS

A collection of cost-saving
Ideas for the horse lover!





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Articles written by Wendy Croney

ON THE COVER

*Horses grazing at
Stonewater Ranch
in Plain, WA*

PHOTO BY
NW HORSE SOURCE



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STAFF

PUBLISHER Karen Pickering
EDITOR Kim Roe
COVER DESIGN Karen Pickering
ARTICLE DESIGN & LAYOUT Randy Bourland

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Northwest Horse Source
6165 Prospero Rd
Peyton, CO 80831
Phone: 360-332-5579
Info: info@nwhorsesource.com
Advertising: sales@nwhorsesource.com
www.nwhorsesource.com

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Budget-wise Horsekeeping

How to Lower the Costs of Basic Horse Care

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WENDY CRONEY

FOR THE BUDGET-WISE PERSON, one of the first steps in the journey of horse ownership is figuring out how much your best friend will cost you. While the financial responsibility will fluctuate due to unknown variables, it is truly helpful to figure the “bottom line.” This includes feed and the bare essentials such as hoof care.

I have figured out that an average sized horse costs roughly \$2,760 per year to keep at home. This breaks down to \$230/month and is divided out as follows: Hay, \$95; small amount of grain, \$50; salt, \$4; hoof trims, \$40 (I trim my horses every 4 weeks); dental \$16; vaccines \$7; and fly repellents/grooming aids/miscellaneous, \$15.

These are ongoing costs that repeat as long as you own a horse and will vary according to the economy and specific area in which you live. Of course you will likely spend more on your horse, but for the purposes of this article I am keeping it as basic as possible to give you a number to begin with.

As a do-it-yourselfer and “research-and-learn-the-best-practices” type, I have actually pared down the above number for my horses. This has been important because I’ve had as many as nine horses at a time! Currently I own five. I have discovered many ways to keep horses healthy and happy while reducing my bottom line and would love to share my budget friendly methods with you. Since we are well into winter, this month we’ll focus on feed. At this point in the year, even those of us with lots of pasture are feeding hay, and it’s no longer an inexpensive feed.

The least costly way to buy grass hay (which I’ve found to be best for my horses) is to go to a local farmer selling it fresh out of the field. Plan ahead each year by watching the weather and keeping an eye on advertisements for hay. Choose a good price and



Providing hay in slow feeding nets allows your horse constant access to forage without gorging itself.

be sure to go look at it before you commit to buying it. If you have a truck and trailer and willing friends to assist, you can fill up your barn with hay to use throughout the winter at much less than it will cost you from the feed store — savings!

Now you have fresh hay, but what is the most economical way to feed it? Is your horse a hard or easy keeper? What does your feeding location look like? Individual or group setting?

It’s well known that horses do best with constant access to feed, especially in inclement weather. Not only will they be happier, they will be healthier. Research shows that horses need to eat small amounts 24/7 with no more than 30 minutes without eating. With this in mind (along with my financial bottom line), I use a feeding method that is

the least wasteful and the most beneficial for horses: slow feeders. There are several types available now, making it easy for you to decide what will work best in your situation.

I have horses that are “easy keepers,” a group setting and feed inside the barn so I use slow feed hay nets (see closeup, next page). These nets can also be used outside. The general daily hay allotment goes in nets that have 1½-inch holes. For the evening feeding, my horses get hay in nets with 1-inch holes, providing them with hay all night. If you have hard keepers and can feed inside, you may like the box type slow feeders that can hold an entire bale so the horse eats as much as he wants. Either way, slow feeding mimics nature by allowing the horse to “graze” all day. This lowers the risk of colic, ulcers and other gastrointestinal problems. The other advantage to this system is that little to no hay is wasted — savings!

Because I have lots of pasture, I seldom feed grain in the summer months; the horses are already ingesting too many calories in a day. Even if you feed hay year round, you may not need grain in the warmer seasons as horses burn fewer calories. During the winter, however, I add some timothy pellets to my horses’ daily ration. Many

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Slow feeding hay nets are more durable and have smaller holes than traditional nets.

processed, branded grain products are very good and come backed by significant research. However, for me I prefer grass hay pellets because I don't have to analyze the ingredients label. They are also the most cost effective and the horses grow to love them — savings!

Most horses do not receive all the nutrients they need from hay alone, so I also feed a quality vitamin mineral supplement I took time to research. This product contains certain ingredients missing from the local soils in Northwest Washington where I live. There are many vitamin supplements on the market, but with a bit of time spent researching you can find the best one for your particular situation.

Salt is also a basic mineral that horses require and it comes in a brick or in loose form. Remember that if you already provide a vitamin/mineral supplement you can over mineralize by purchasing "mineral salt." Plain white salt is less expensive and allows the horses what they need, without forcing what they may not need — savings! I use both loose and brick salt as I've observed my horses have times when they seem to want more.

In conclusion, with a few simple ideas and a little investment, you can save enough money in basic horse care expenses to make a real difference. I look forward to sharing money saving tips in other areas of horse care and management in the coming months. Stay tuned, and enjoy your horses! **NWHS**

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Lowering the Cost of Basic Horse Care

Save Time and Money by Using (or Reusing) Everyday Items

PHOTOS: WENDY CRONEY

SO, TIME TO RIDE MY HORSE and this includes catch, tie, groom and tack. What does the process look like in my barn? I'm always looking to save time and money, even in these mundane tasks.

To begin, whether I retrieve the horse from stall, paddock or field, I'll clean his hooves *before* entering the aisle way. This saves cleanup after grooming. Next, I sometimes like to cross tie the horse for convenience and use DIY cross ties. These consist of repurposed strong rope or braided twine (never a shortage of baling twine) and I love to reuse everything!



Baling twine has many uses around the barn; use it as is or braided into a rope.

To make cross ties, attach panic snaps to braided twine or make "safety ties." One popular commercial example is called The Tie Blocker. I make my own from an old ring snaffle bit. First, use a hacksaw to cut the bit into two units in the center of the mouthpiece. Then, take a carabiner, attach it to the half bit ring, then attach this to a screw eye and place at the desirable height. The length of rope and height of the screw eyes are determined by the area you will span. A "tie blocker" style safety tie is designed to allow the horse to slowly pull some slack in the lead rope, helping to eliminate panic and claustrophobic tendencies. As for panic snaps, these have a



Make your own safety tie using an old ring snaffle bit.

sleeve that you can grasp and pull quickly, releasing the horse if needed.

I recommend using a safety release tie such as described above for at least one side of your cross ties. The matching tie can have a regular snap. I have seen a horse panic while cross tied and rear over backward. This can happen in a split second. However, a quick thinking handler can swiftly release the horse via the panic snap. (**Note:** Never leave your horse unattended while cross tied.)

Now that our horse has its hooves cleaned and is safely tied, let's groom. While grooming, use one hand for the brush and with the other, check your horse for lumps, hot spots or sores. It's always better to catch

an injury before the ride.

Next up is the mane/tail and I love a long, thick and healthy looking tail. This is easy to achieve with little effort and no extra money spent on special grooming products. These can make the job easier, but are unnecessary. First, finger comb the tail, then divide it into three sections and braid almost to the end. Fasten the tail with a small rubber band and fold it in half or thirds, depending on how long it is.

Next, put it into an old discarded sock that you've cut the top of so you have four tie strips about four inches long each. Even if the sock isn't very long, the goal is to protect the bottom half of the tail from mud. Mud removes moisture, causing brittleness and promotes breakage. The sock also helps protect hair from being pulled out.

About every two weeks I replace the dirty sock with a clean one, comb and rebraid the tail. Don't procrastinate, or you could find one very large dreadlock! Using this inexpensive method your horse will have a lovelier tail by the end of the wet season.

I also repurpose discarded clothing and use it for cleaning and oiling tack and other items. It's nice to have an abundance of rags that can be simply thrown away when heavily soiled. Another purpose for these "disposable" rags is wound cleaning. Occasionally one of my horses will have mild diarrhea. A clean rag soaked in a vinegar solution (50/50 or stronger) cleans and soothes the pain of minor skin abrasions. After use, just throw it in the trash.

Speaking of vinegar, it is an inexpensive, non-toxic cleaner for everything from the horse to the tack room. It deodorizes manure and urine odors, and kills germs (not ALL germs, however). When it dries there is no vinegar odor.

So, stop buying expensive cleaners and skin soothers. Save and repurpose that plentiful baling twine, those old socks and discarded clothes destined for the thrift store. Fashion your own safety ties, check for injuries while grooming, put a sock on the tail and clean hooves in the stall. There are lots of ways to save time and money in the barn; join me in future articles to learn more. Thank you for reading and happy riding! **NWHS**



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Lowering the Cost of Basic Horse Care

Tips to Save Time and Money When Riding

PHOTOS: WENDY CRONEY

DO YOU LOVE A TROT OUT ON THE TRAIL, riveting ranch sorting practice, or a creative trail challenge event? Whatever the event, here are a few tips to save you time and money.

Before loading into the horse trailer, I love to groom and saddle my steed in the comfort of our own barn. It's easier on both of us—familiar, dry and clean—and definitely nicer than saddling at your destination if (often when in the Northwest) the weather turns windy or rainy. Tacking up away from home in possible inclement weather just isn't the type of the therapy I'm looking for on a ride!

Saddling at home also helps save time when there are unexpected delays. Perhaps you're supposed to meet friends at the trailhead at a predetermined time, but are delayed by road construction. You arrive late to find everyone is waiting on you; not a lot of fun. Had you saddled at home, those impatient eye rolls will turn to smiles when you unload and everyone sees your horse is saddled and ready to go.

Now that you are saddled and ready to load your beauty, be sure to check your cinch and snug it up if needed. Keeping it relaxed may seem like a kindness for your horse, but having to re-saddle after reaching your destination due to slippage will defeat the purpose of tacking up at home. And you definitely don't want the saddle scooting too far back or even ending up underneath the horse during transport. This will cause big problems!

There are many potential problems involved with successful trailer loading. Some can be avoided with a few simple tricks. Is your horse reluctant to hop in the trailer? Try sprinkling a few handfuls of shavings over the mats. Black floors in horse trailers

can seem like a bottomless pit from a horse's perspective. Shavings help to show them the surface is solid. (If shavings aren't available, even grass, dirt or something else handy can remedy this particular problem).

On to securing your best friend safely inside the trailer. Some people tie their horse while others leave them loose. More important than the decision to tie or not is this: **always unclip the lead rope from the halter.** If you like a horse tied, use a short lead. Why? If the end of the lead rope manages to come out the window and is long enough to get caught in the wheel while attached to the halter... there are no words. This tragic event has actually happened to horses and is totally avoidable.



A disposable diaper makes a handy and inexpensive bandage for a first aid kit.

If your destination is the trailhead, here are a few suggestions to help ensure a pleasant and safe excursion.

When Galloping Horse Equestrian teaches students to trail ride, here are some of

the things we carry and recommend come along for the ride: lunch or snack, water, horse treats, halter, lead rope, pocket knife and, of course, we wear our helmets. Some other inexpensive saddlebag items I like to add include a first aid kit, duct tape and twine. Many emergency repairs can be accomplished using only a pocket knife, duct tape and twine, saving the permanent repairs for back at the barn.

The first aid kit can be outfitted with useful and thrifty items such as a disposable diaper and some antibiotic salve. A diaper makes a large inexpensive bandage, has its own fasteners, or can be cut into smaller sizes. The salve can soothe, reduce friction and medicate. I also like to carry inexpensive drugstore antihistamine tablets. Encountering a wasp or hornet's nest during a trail ride happens occasionally. Remember that it's always best to have medications on your person (not packed in saddlebags) should you become separated from your horse. This also applies to your cell phone. (Note: the above isn't a complete list, just a few good ideas.)



Cool down your horse's muscles slowly after riding by leaving the pad on his back while grooming.

When finished riding for the day, cool the horses down slowly. I have my students dismount and walk the last quarter mile back to the trailer. Once there, we tie the saddled horses and let them stand for at least 30 minutes. When unsaddling, leave the saddle pads on while brushing and cleaning hooves. This method is great if you don't own a cooler or didn't bring it. A slow cool down allows muscles to relax naturally and aids in reducing painful contraction. Give the horse a short walk after grooming to stretch and offer them water.

With a few little tricks this season, you can save time, money and enjoy a safer more enjoyable ride. Until next time! **NWHS**



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Get Creative and Save Money

Repair, Reuse, and Recycle

PHOTOS: WENDY CRONEY

LET'S FACE IT: in this day and age, people who don't repair, reuse, and recycle spend the most money. Years ago I realized the dream of horse ownership was attainable by being shrewd and creative. As I've acquired more horses over the years I've developed these characteristics even more. I'm happy to share some of these tips with you.

No matter what I've had as far as land or outbuildings, creating a user-friendly routine is key. Performing all aspects of horse care efficiently will minimize time spent on the work and maximize time spent enjoying my lovely horse.

Much pleasure can be derived from making your own tools... Often, you can customize your creation, making it work even better than the commercial model.

One aspect of horse care is getting your horse from stall to turn-out and back again. Whether you have a barn with stalls or a shelter in a pasture, it's ideal to have a paddock where your horse can be turned out by simply opening a stall door. Then, opening the paddock gate to turn out to pasture makes it even easier.

Keeping water and feed only at the barn or shelter rather than in multiple locations causes your horse to move more, inviting better fitness and health. If you need to bring your horse in at any certain time, I've found that consistently giving a little bit of grain at those times of day makes for great cooperation. Funny how a thousand-pound animal in a beautiful pasture will run to the barn for a handful of grain in their bucket! As long as you are consistent it usually works and saves time.



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Another place to save time is in clean up. I never stand around. I have the wheelbarrow and manure fork in a handy place and use them while filling water or waiting for horses to arrive from the pasture after calling them; time saved! Also, if your horse isn't shut in a stall and has a paddock attached, very little stall bedding is needed. I use bedding pellets in my stalls, making cleaning incredibly fast with fewer trips with the wheelbarrow to discard dirty bedding. If you do keep him stalled, bed just half the stall; it saves money!

For grooming, a nice area with everything you need is handy. I recycle second-hand shoe caddies (the type with pockets) and hang them close to a grooming area. Then I insert brushes, fly repellent, clippers, scissors, rags, and more into the pockets. Eliminating store-bought horse related organizers can be a great savings.



A second-hand shoe caddy holds grooming supplies.

In the tack room you can build a saddle holder to hang on the wall or any convenient location. When not in use it hangs down out of the way. You'll need a piece of 4x lumber approximately the length of your saddle, an eye screw for the wall and a screw hook on the 4x4. Adding a piece of carpet helps your saddle slide on and off easily. It's super easy,



4 x 4 home-made saddle holders.

convenient, and best of all, saves money.

As the popularity of groundwork training has increased, the number of tools has as well. One such tool is the "handy stick" (it has a variety of names). If you have a dressage whip, buggy whip or short lunge type whip, these will work in most cases. If you're routinely training powerful, spoiled, problem horses, you may want to have a stronger extension of your arm at the ready.

Just to clarify, these are for a horse in training to run or bump into, finding a "closed door" while looking for the correct door or space to move towards. They are not for hitting your horse! I've made my own with a smooth white temporary fence post, pieces of miscellaneous leather, and electrical tape. Carefully crafted, mine were made more than ten years ago and have held up perfectly. More savings!

I've purchased retail many times over the years for my horses. There are tons of great things to buy, and it's fun when you can get a cool item brand new from a local retailer. Still, much pleasure can be derived from making your own tools as well. Often, you can customize your creation, making it work even better than the commercial model.

Take a fresh look at your own place, your tools and how you are set up. Can you make the work flow more efficiently? Become more organized? Spend less money and have more quality time with your best friend? Sure you can! Refresh your memory on past Budget Wise Horsekeeping articles in the Northwest Horse Source Magazine, and keep an eye out for new ones in the upcoming issues. Save time, save money, and ride your horses!

NWHS

Horseplay on a Budget

Build Your Own Western Game Sets

PHOTOS: WENDY CRONEY

DO YOU LOVE TO GYMKHANA? Would you like to play and practice western games at home? The equipment is expensive to buy, so here are some tips for building a pole bending set and a 2 barrel flag set on a budget. These pieces can be rearranged to make other games, or you can make additional and set several games up at the same time.

Pole Bending Set

Supplies

- 6 white PVC pipes, 8 feet by 1½ inches; these are inexpensive at box hardware stores and come in the correct length.
- 1 or 2 bags of cement mix
- 6 one gallon containers. I use gallon buckets that horse supplements come in. Some businesses give these away.
- Water

The total cost should be under \$30 for the project. Savings!

Instructions

Gather all supplies together. Once cement is mixed with water, it's time to go to work.

1. Using a large container such as a wheelbarrow, mix the cement with enough water for a thick, batter-like consistency.
2. With a shovel or coffee can put cement mixture into buckets 6–10 inches deep (your preference).
3. Put a PVC pipe into each bucket, centered and straight up.
4. Support as needed to make sure poles remain straight and centered until the cement fully sets.

Setup

From your start line, set poles every 21 feet. Now have fun!

Two-barrel Flag Race

Supplies

- Two metal barrels, 20-gallon size. Available at various auto shops and other places that use fluids as part of the services they provide. They usually have to pay to discard when empty, and are happy to have them hauled away.
- Two ¾ inch x 5 foot PVC pipes
- Two 12 inch square fabric pieces—one light color, one dark color. I use bandanas.
- Duct tape or 4 zip ties or string for attaching the fabric to the PVC pipes
- Some dirt, sand or rocks for weight

Instructions

1. Attach the fabric to the PVC pipes using duct tape, zip ties, or string.
2. If the barrels are completely intact, you'll want to cut the top off each. We cut ours with a welding torch. There are shops that will cut the tops off for you if you have no way to do it yourself.
3. Take the barrels and flagpoles to the area you'll be using them and drop a few shovels of rocks or dirt into each barrel.
4. Put one flag pole into each barrel.

Setup

Place the first barrel 30 feet from your start line, then measure 100 feet and place the second barrel. Now you're ready to practice with your very own equipment. Savings!

There are many other games using the pole bending type poles, and other flag races that can be made very affordably, and you don't have to be super handy. Expand your horseplay possibilities, have a great time, and last but not least, *save money!*



A pole bending set is easy to make, and a bandana doubles as an inexpensive flag.

DIY Trail Obstacles

Would you like to build trail challenge obstacles on a budget? Here are some ideas for obtaining supplies that can be used to build trail obstacles.

I made a great water obstacle at my place using a couple large plastic tarps I already had and old stall mats, big rocks and some railroad ties for the side boundaries. The railroad ties were free on Craigslist. We had some rocks, but acquired more from people freeing up space for another project.

I realize not everyone has extra stall mats lying around. You could use more layers of tarp, or maybe you have a better idea. Burying the ends of tarps with dirt or gravel helps to keep them from curling up. Of course you'll need to dig a hole to the size and depth you want the water obstacle to be.

Railroad ties work well for other obstacles, including back through patterns, step-overs and bridges. Speaking of bridges, to build your own you'll need sturdy lumber. Watch the ads, be quick to respond, and you can find great bargains.

Remember, one person's trash is a horse person's treasure (or could be)! Devise your plan, peruse what you already have, and keep a sharp eye on the free ads. Supplies can be obtained affordably. Use your imagination and build games and fun obstacles to add variety and spice to your riding.

If you like these ideas or have others to share, I'd be delighted to hear from you.

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Develop a Feeding Program

Learn What Your Horse Really Needs

PHOTO: WENDY CRONEY

BRRR, IT'S COLD! Why don't our horses seem cold? Perhaps it's because they are fuzzy, healthy, and cozy in their winter blankets. We humans brave the frosty days and cold, dark evenings caring for these fluffy, nickering beasts. They look to us for food and comfort this time of year. We worry about whether they are warm and dry enough, drinking enough, and getting adequate exercise. We love them, and want to provide the best we can for our loyal friends.

How do we optimize their health? When it comes to proper nutrition, are we educated about their nutritional needs? There's been vast progress in horse health research causing the knowledge-seeking student of horses to get weak in the knees. What is correct and to whom do we listen? Where does a person start? Hopefully I can help.

In my many years of horsekeeping, I have yet to land upon the perfect nutritional scheme for my own herd of five horses that trust me to keep them healthy. I've done a fair amount of research recently, and have found there are two methods of supplying the nutrition each horse needs. There are similarities in gathering the information needed to determine just what your horse requires.

METHOD 1: Test the forage you feed to determine what is lacking, then buy the needed supplements separately and add them to a non-fortified grain or hay pellet.

Horse nutrition experts have determined

that forage should be the largest percentage of a horse's feed. Most forage (hay or grass) will have much of what a horse needs nutritionally — more at certain times of the year and less at other times. For instance, when



hay is freshly cut and baled, it's richer in nutrients than it is six months later. Fresh grass will change nutritionally several times from early spring to late fall.

Most horse owners feed some combination of pasture grass and hay for forage. Both will need to be tested throughout the year. Different vitamin and mineral supplements may be required during stages of forage age or growth.

Research to find what your horse needs for nutritional health. Some are insulin resistant, have metabolic disorders, PSSM or other issues. Feeding specific supplements can help. If you are fortunate enough to have a horse that has no special needs, this can be simple. Experts can pinpoint much of this information, but it's good to ply your own due diligence as well.

If you aren't sure if your horse has special needs, ask your veterinarian to examine and perform testing to determine if anything is amiss. Be prepared to answer questions about your horse. A standard exam would include normal temperature, resting heart rate, respiration count, and things like how many gallons of water is typical for him to drink, how many hours on pasture, how many pounds of hay, grain, what grain, supplements, and how much exercise. Being prepared with written information will help you get the most from your appointment and money spent with your vet.

When the forage test results come back to you and the vet has determined if

there are any additional needs, you can then make a list of what to purchase.

METHOD 2: Buy a commercial feed that has the formula your horse needs.

Determine what supplementation your horse needs as in Method 1, then find a commercial feed company that makes a wide variety of feed formulas. Call and ask them to work with you to determine the correct formula for your horse's nutritional needs. They likely will have one you can purchase locally. This simplifies the feeding routine amazingly! Although you may still need to purchase one or two separate supplements to totally meet all your horse's needs, it can be so much easier, especially if you are feeding more than one horse!

This article might seem to have fewer money-saving tips than my past ones. I haven't written the words "savings" or "cheaper." However, I know beyond a shadow of a doubt — from personal experience and a lot of money spent — that doing the legwork is truly worth it. Don't be fooled; this article is definitely about thrift, savings and being cheaper!

I welcome tips, ideas, and experiences from Northwest Horse Source readers; please feel free to contact me and share! **NWHS**



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Dealing With Mud

Creativity Saves Money

PHOTOS: WENDY CRONEY

ANOTHER NEW YEAR, another opportunity for budget friendly tips on how to care for our favorite four-legged friend — the horse!

Here at Galloping Horse Equestrian my goal is to work hard each day to give great care to my beloved horses. I'm constantly on the lookout for new ideas to streamline our program. This year, while pondering how to ease the muddy trek from the field to the barn, I had a great idea. (Well, we'll see by spring if it's still a great idea.) So far it's been wonderful. The ground around the gates, a shelter, and heavily used paths throughout the acreage is much more pleasant for the horses as well as their handler than it was last winter.

This brainstorm was spawned by something I did two years ago in a long lane that the horses use to get from field to barnyard. It was simple and completely free; I placed logs across the lane about every 3 to 4 feet so the horses had to slow to a careful walk while traversing the lane.

This prevents the horses from churning the land into deep mud by madly dashing through it when the dinner bell rings. It's a blast watching them race each other to the barn, then suddenly stop, slowly walking the rest of the 200 or so feet like ladies and gentleman stepping over all those logs.

Several areas around here need more than an obstacle to prevent a mud issue. I knew I needed to put something in the trouble spots to firm up these areas. So, in pondering what material to use for mud control, my first choice was gravel (spendy!); my second choice was hog fuel (less spendy). Gravel doesn't rot and

turn to mush as do wood pieces, but I've used gravel for years in paddocks and it eventually disappears down into the mud. Hog fuel is less expensive and many people use it because of this factor, though it doesn't hold up as well as gravel. It disappears into the mud even more quickly than gravel, but the cost difference is significant. So what does the budget-wise equestrian do?



I've done a bit of experimenting, and discovered that both materials perform much better if you lay road fabric down then put your hog fuel (or gravel) on top. Either material will become firmer and won't disappear

into the mud. If the horses are prevented from dashing through and tearing it up it will last even longer.

This is what I did: purchased road fabric, purchased a load of hog fuel, procured an assortment of unwanted round fence posts, 4x4 lengths of lumber, and a few railroad ties.

Then I laid road fabric in the potentially muddy areas. I covered that with a thick layer of hog fuel, about 8" deep. I then used some of the 4x4's as borders to keep the material from spreading off of the area where I wanted it. Next, I put some of the logs, posts, and 4x4's across about 3 to 4 feet apart along this "mud bridge". The obstacles encourage the horses to slowly walk through the newly prepared area.

Here's another thrifty idea: I put my creations in a lane that is much narrower than the actual gate opening, but wide enough for the horses to walk single file across. Not covering the entire pathway allowed me to save on product. Don't fret if your suspicious prey animals choose to walk around the strange looking new thing suddenly appearing in their world! As that ground deteriorates over time they will choose to use the dry mud-free area.

Another idea I used with one wider pass-through was to put different kinds of obstacles in the way so the horses will choose the hog fuel trail instead of going around, and have to pick their way through some obstacles instead of just stepping over logs.

I decided to write about this subject this month because I know that countless equestrians have mud, and I've never seen this solution in any other barn. I hope this idea proves helpful to readers.

I also have another helpful way to overcome drainage problems in muddy barnyards and paddocks; it's incredibly easy and cost effective compared to digging and installing drainage. We are working with this new method on our property, but that's a story for another time.

I wish you a happy new year, and I welcome Northwest Horse Source readers to share your great ideas with me. Now go enjoy those beautiful horses!

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Wendy Croney has owned and ridden horses her entire life, discovering she has a true talent for effective, gentle horse training as well as teaching horseback riding. She has been training, teaching horsemanship and giving lessons in multiple disciplines for more than 30 years using her own methods developed through experience, as well as learning from Richard Shrake, Clinton Anderson and many others. Wendy is known for an economic approach to horse care and personally provides it to her own horses, including hoof trims. She focuses on creative ways to keep horses as naturally as possible on a tight budget. Wendy has retired from her business, "Galloping Horse Equestrian" in Colorado Springs, CO, however she is still available for consulting and continues the quest to provide the finest horse care for the most effective cost.