The Importance of Using a Fly Sheet by Emily Heggan

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Springtime is here, which means summer is right around the corner. Spring and summer bring out those pesky bugs and insects that annoy and bother both our horses and us.

Now is the time to prepare and get your bug armor and protection ready. Having a fly sheet for your horse is one of the best items to shield your horse from the biting bugs. Flies and other bugs love and live to eat and reproduce. Horses and their surroundings provide the perfect atmosphere for both of these activities for flies. Unlike wild horses, which can take mud baths or running to escape pesky fly masses, our domestic horses are often at the mercy of flies.

This is why our horses need all the help that we can give them. Whether itâ€™s fly spray, sticky traps, insect predators, misting systems, or good farm management, any of these things will help your horse. Fly spray applied to horses will only give relief for a limited time. Fly gear such as sheets, masks or fly boots will provide all day protection and can be used on horses while in stalls, out in a pasture or while you are riding.

Fly sheets should fit the horse, just as any other blanket or sheet would. Measuring for a fly sheet is the same process as measuring for a blanket. Fly sheets are very versatile and should be the number one item in your horseâ€™s summer wardrobe. There are two types of fly sheets: Scrims and Turnouts. Scrim sheets for use on stalled horses or at shows you may see them over the horse covering the tack as well. Turnout fly sheets are used for horses in outside or in pastures.

Scrim sheets are usually made of lightweight cotton or nylon mesh material and they fit more loosely like a cooler. Because of this this, scrims are unsuitable for turnout. Though scrims do work well for keeping flies off a well-groomed horse in a clean stall or at a show. One benefit, however, of scrim sheets is they tend to act as an anti-sweat sheet, which helps to minimize the attraction of flies.

Turnout flysheets are made of a material stiffer than cotton or nylon scrims, much like the material lawn chairs are made out of. They are well designed and are made to fit properly. Turnout fly sheets usually stay centered on a horse and don't move too much, even without relying on tight surcingles or leg straps. During the winter, people usually cross the hind leg straps. But during fly season, not crossing the hind leg straps allows the horse's tail to swing more freely between the legs without getting snagged on or tangled in the straps, getting those pesky flies on their belly.

Some fly sheets are UV ray resistant and is made with an open weave helping to keep the horse cooler by allowing body heat out and cool air in. If your horse gets wet from the rain or sweat, these sheets and the horse dry quickly. The durability, toughness and tear-resistance of woven polyvinyl fly sheets are especially good for turnout.

Fly sheets area good item to have during the summer months. Not only are they good protection against flies and other insects, but also they help keep the horse clean, cool and also keeps them protected from the sun and their coat from bleaching out.

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Emily Heggan is a senior at Rowan University majoring in journalism. She currently competes in the 3' hunters with her horse, General, and enjoys writing about equestrian topics like a fly sheets.

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