

## A Guide to Warm Winter Riding



### DRESSING USING LAYERS

If you're too cold, too hot, or too wet it's hard to think happy thoughts, let alone enjoy what you are doing. Dressing in layers, instead of one bulky, do-everything garment, can help prevent uncomfortable and potentially dangerous situations, such as hypothermia. Layering is the relatively simple concept of dressing in a way that allows you to adjust to a wide range of conditions.

To provide an optimum working environment, your internal systems try to maintain a thin layer of warm (30° to 33°C), still air around your body. If the surrounding environment was constant and your life was void of activity, this private micro-climate would be all you would need.

But once you step outdoors you run the risk of knocking your micro-climate out of whack because of physical activity, wind temperature and moisture, which can create conditions too extreme for the body's mechanisms to adapt to.

### CALENDAR of EVENTS



#### PRIVATE & SEMI-PRIVATE LESSONS

Monday, Dec. 22 / Tuesday,  
Dec. 23 / Monday, Dec. 28 /  
Tuesday, Dec. 30

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL WINTER RELAY

Friday, January 2,  
This is the first Winter Relay at Harrogate.  
It is a timed event and there will be prizes  
for the winning team!

#### SECOND EARLY BIRD CAMP DEADLINE

Monday, January 26

#### FINAL PA DAY CAMP

Friday, January 30

#### SPECIALTY CAMPS

Information coming soon

*For more information on any  
of these events please email  
info@harrogatehills.ca*

The school is closed for lessons:  
Wednesday, December 24,  
Thursday, December 25,  
Wednesday, December 31, and  
Thursday, January 1

**We look forward to welcoming  
everyone back in the new year.**

## Layering

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Many people have heard of layering when dressing, or are somewhat familiar with the concept, but there are a few key things to know when dressing to ride in the winter or do anything outdoors for that matter. Riding is by no means a sedentary sport, it is aerobic and causes one to perspire. This makes it all the more important to dress properly in colder weather, indoors or outside.



### Note:

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Anything cotton is probably the worst thing you can wear, particularly if you wear it close to your skin since it absorbs and holds moisture.

Wearing several layers of varying weight and fabric allows you to maintain an optimum micro-climate during periods of physical exertion as well as during times of inactivity.

## Inner Layer

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The inner layer (aka underwear) is the most critical because it is the one that's in direct contact with your skin. Under-wear must transport body moisture (sweat) away from the skin and disperse it to the next layer where it can evaporate.

Why? Water is a very good heat conductor. A wet garment against your skin can draw heat away from your body twenty-five times faster than a dry one. Even in conditions above freezing, this rapid heat loss can cause a dangerous drop in your body's core temperature, leading to hypothermia.

Synthetics such as polypropylene and polyester now dominate as the materials of choice for this layer. Synthetics are light, strong and absorb very little water. The fact that synthetic materials such as these absorb very little moisture allows them to draw the moisture away from your skin, thus reducing the amount of heat loss.

Inner layers are available in light, medium and heavy weights to meet the demands of different activities. Lightweight for aerobic activity where sweat dispersal is paramount. For more stop-and-go activities, mid-weight underwear provides both moisture control and insulation. Heavyweight underwear is best used in cold conditions, where you're relatively inactive. Finally, the inner layer should fit snugly but not be restricting.

Since this layer is most important, it might well be worth the investment in some synthetic long underwear. Any that are made from polyester, polypropylene or another synthetic are appropriate. Outdoor sporting stores usually have a variety that are designed to 'wick' away moisture from your body, keeping you dryer and warmer. Campers Place (Newmarket), Mountain Equipment Co-op (Toronto) or Mark's Work Warehouse are all places to find such long underwear. Seasonally, Costco would also carry some of these items also.

## Mid-layer

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The mid-layer provides insulation and continues the transportation of moisture from the inner-layer. To slow heat loss, this layer must be capable of retaining the warmth that is generated by your body. Wool and synthetics are well suited for this purpose because the structure of the fibres create small air spaces that trap molecules of warm air.

As far as moisture management goes, synthetics have the upper hand because they absorb little water, allowing faster evaporation. Wool absorbs up to 30% of its own weight in water, leaving it heavy and difficult to dry. Synthetic fleece or pile garments (pants, jackets, pullovers and vests) as well as being lightweight, are very durable and require less care than wool.

## Outer-layer

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The outer-layer protects your micro-climate from the elements. It should also allow air to circulate and excess moisture to escape. Choose on the basis of what you plan to do, where you plan to do it and what you plan to spend.

For dry conditions, a breathable (uncoated) wind shell may be all you need. If you expect conditions to be more severe, a waterproof (coated) rain jacket might be adequate, but often coated rain gear will trap moisture inside the garment making it uncomfortable and over a long period, soak your insulating layers. A variety of breathable, waterproof layers are available for those venturing out and who want the warmest combination.

That said, there are no miracle fabrics. Under heavy exertion, your body simply produces more water vapour than any fabric can disperse. The result can be a build-up of moisture on the inside of the garment, leaving you wet, clammy and cold. Strip off a layer or open any ventilation zippers before this happens and you'll be a happier rider.

Wool absorbs  
up to

**30%**

of its own weight  
in water.



**25x**

**FASTER....**

... the speed  
that a wet garment  
can draw heat  
away from  
your body  
compared with  
a dry one



# 50%

of a person's  
total heat loss  
occurs through  
the head.

## Head Protection

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It is estimated that up to 50% of a person's total heat loss occurs through the head. This is because your body considers the head to be a rather important extremity and therefore pumps a hefty volume of blood to it, keeping it warm and your brain thinking clearly. Subsequently, your head acts like a radiator, letting heat escape. This puts a strain on the rest of your system because your body must now use additional energy to rewarm the blood as it recirculates.

A good wool or fleece hat will not only slow heat loss through your head, it will also make your hands and feet feel warmer because of the improved circulation. In extremely cold conditions, nothing protects your face or keeps in heat like a full-face balaclava or a neck gaiter.

## Hands & Feet

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In its effort to keep your head and your body's vital organs warm in cold conditions, the heart reduces blood flow to the hands and feet. These areas do not generate much heat on their own, so some insulation and protection from the elements is needed. Mittens are warmer than an equivalent pair of gloves because the whole hand contributes to the warming process. The trade-off is that mitts inhibit dexterity. Gloves are good

for activities that require independent finger control.

As with the rest of your body, a layering system will work best. Thin polypropylene glove liners and socks are available at outdoor supply stores.

For insulation, wool is the preferred material and provides the best balance of moisture management, warmth and cushioning. The addition of a polypro liner

sock will speed up moisture transport from the feet to the outer wool layer. You can forgo liner socks by purchasing thicker single socks made from a wool / acrylic / polyester blend.

Socks should fit snugly. If they are too tight, circulation can be restricted and your feet will get cold. Conversely, a loose sock can slip or bunch up, creating pressure spots that can lead to blisters.



## DECEMBER TRIVIA QUESTION:

*You have a quarter horse and he seems to move 'short' in front and sometimes he trips. What is the most likely cause of this problem?*

The answer will be in next month's issue of The Mane Bit.

### TRIVIA GUIDELINES

- Place your answer in the box found in the lounge and include your name and contact information.
- There will be a random draw from the correct submitted answers and one person will win a prize.
- The winner will be announced in the following month's Newsletter.

## The answer to November's Trivia Question is:

**Q:** Even though it's not really the bone that is the source of pain, there is a bone we have that the horse also shares. Given that it can be fractured, the horse probably doesn't find it funny if he hits it. What do we sometimes call this bone and what is its real name?

**A:** Humerus Bone was the most common answer. An even more precise answer would be the Olecranon Bone.

Well done to all who entered!

The winner is **Bennett Tillo** who wins a \$25 gift card from Greenhawk.

Honourable mention goes to Charlotte, Pax, Marleigh, Scarlett & Noah.



## PHOTO GALLERY Mount Albert Santa Claus parade December 6, 2025



Captions, clockwise from top left:  
A quick visit with Mr. & Mrs. Claus. /  
Emma, Hannah, and Karina / Anne,  
Jackson, and Cinthia / Sarah and  
Stoney / A view from behind of the  
Harrogate gang / All ready to roll...



## Private & Semi-private lesson opportunities

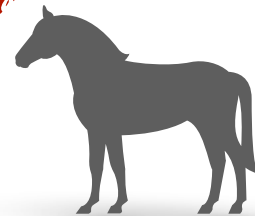
**Monday, December 22 / Tuesday, December 23  
Monday, December 29 and Tuesday December 30**

We are offering a special opportunity for students to enjoy either a private or semi-private lesson. We aren't able to provide this very often so take advantage of it while you can.

There are still some spots available.

**REACH OUT TO  
INFO@HARROGATEHILLS.COM  
TO SECURE A LESSON TIME.**

Many thanks for all the support for our Christmas Party Raffle which was held Sunday, December 14. We are so grateful for everyone who generously donated items for the raffle and to everyone who purchased tickets. The Harrogate horses really appreciate your support!



*The kindest treatment of the horse  
is gained through knowledge.*