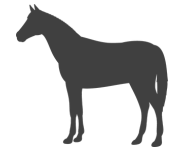


<https://www.deuka.de/en/current/coat-change-in-the-horse/>

Supporting the horse during the change of coat

## COAT CHANGE IN HORSES - A HAIRY AFFAIR



Horses change their coats twice a year. Between February and April and July and November, the animals adjust to the upcoming seasons. For the horse's body, this means a feat of strength. After all, not only is old hair shed, but new hair is also produced. Horse owners should therefore support their horses during the change of coat: Among other things, it is important to provide zinc, vitamin A, high-quality protein and omega-3 fatty acids. The ration can be easily adapted with the help of tailor-made supplementary feed.

### How the horse's coat changes

The **change of coat in horses** is a hairy affair. Already in the depths of winter or during midsummer, your horse's body hormonally adjusts to the upcoming change of its coat. This means that horses are always early. When it is still cold, they already lose the thick winter coat and in late summer the first thicker hairs grow. Conversely, this means: When the horse is shedding heavily, the change of coat is almost in its final phase, the new coat is already formed and the old one is just being shed.

However, the change of coat in horses does not only depend on the light conditions of the season.

**Temperature, hormones and nutrition** also **influence** the renewal of the coat. Horses react to the prevailing weather conditions. Icy days can delay the change of coat, hot spells accelerate it. **How long the** coat change takes therefore depends on various factors. The breed and age of the horse also play an important role, along with weather and husbandry. Some horses complete their coat change in a few weeks, while for others it takes months. In principle, the change of coat in spring takes more time than in autumn.

### Which horses tend to have problems with the change of coat?

Healthy horses usually have no difficulties with the change of coat. However, you should not be deceived by this: The change of coat **demand high performance from** your horse's **body and metabolism**. After all, the coat changes completely. For this reason, the change of coat **of your horse** can be accompanied by a **number of problems**. The following horses are particularly susceptible to this:

- older horses
- Horses with metabolic problems (e.g. Cushing 's or EMS)
- overworked horses
- Horses that have not been fed according to their needs (and therefore have an oversupply or undersupply)
- sick horses

## Signs that your horse is having problems during the change of coat

Horses with difficulties during the change of coat are often easy to recognise.

- They usually have a duller coat and appear overall **limp and lacking in energy**. Swollen legs, especially when horses are fresh out of the box, are also a sign of metabolic irregularities. Horses with coat change problems **often change their coat more slowly**.
- During the coat change, the **cardiovascular system** is also under strain. When the fluffy winter coat has not yet been shed, but the sun is already warming up the horse's organism is under a lot of strain. If your horse **sweats** a lot at this time, this is sometimes a sign of a problematic change of coat.
- Since the quality of the coat change is directly related to your horse's metabolism, **horses with metabolic diseases often find it difficult to lose their old coat**. Metabolic diseases that negatively affect your horse's metabolism include Equine Cushing 's Syndrome (Syn. Cushing) and Equine Metabolic Syndrome (Syn. EMS).
- Finally, existing problems and diseases such as **mallenders, allergies, eczema or digestive problems** can increase or break out during the horse's coat change. Especially in older and heavy-fed horses, the exhausting coat change can also be accompanied by **weight loss**. So always remain vigilant.



Hair, hair, nothing but hair. Twice a year, the horses' change of coat causes a major cleaning in the stable (© Nadine Haase - stock.adobe.com).

## Change of coat problem: The horse has dandruff

The formation of dandruff is a common and annoying problem during the change of coat. The reason for this is the irritated and therefore particularly sensitive skin of your horse, which tends to **crust over and dry out** and is particularly susceptible to **fungal infestation**. Other causes are **dirt residues, excessive sebum and dead skin cells**. Finally, an **oversupply or undersupply of nutrients** (e.g. zinc) can fuel the formation of dandruff.

There is no patent remedy for dandruff. Rather, the treatment depends on the underlying cause. **Brush your horse's coat regularly and remove dirt and impurities. Special shampoos** can be used for this purpose, which either replenish the grease or moisturise the coat. - But do not overdo it! After all, excessive care can also stimulate the formation of dandruff.

If dandruff only occurs during the change of coat, check your horse's nutritional intake. **Analyse the basic feed ration** to ensure that your horse is getting all the nutrients it needs for a smooth change of coat.

## Change of coat in the horse: now the need for certain nutrients increases

### Proteins / amino acids

Hair consists mostly of keratin. **Keratins are structural proteins** and make up the main component of hair. If the horse does not consume enough **protein** in its feed, hair growth is inhibited, hair quality is reduced and the overall change of coat is delayed. In order for the horse to form keratins, **it needs essential amino acids** with the feed.

### Vitamin A or beta carotene

Horses need vitamin A for the **development and regeneration as well as the protection of the skin**. The vitamin is produced by the body itself. For this, the organism needs beta carotene (syn.  $\beta$ -carotene). A direct intake of vitamin A - or sufficient beta carotene - counteracts dull coat, hair loss or itching during the change of coat.

### Zinc

The trace element **zinc supports the growth and division of hair cells**. Thus it is of central importance for the change of coat. Without sufficient zinc, the horse's body cannot form keratin. The structural protein keratin is the main component of hair. If zinc is lacking, hair loss and dandruff can occur - the hair becomes brittle, thin and rough.

### Biotin

Biotin (syn. vitamin H) **influences cell growth and the formation of new hair**. Horses can synthesise the water-soluble vitamin in the intestine on their own, so that a biotin deficiency rarely occurs. However, it has been shown that an additional biotin supply can help with dry, brittle coats without shine.

### Omega-3 fatty acids

Omega-3 fatty acids belong to the essential fatty acids that the **body cannot produce itself**. Among other things, they are an important component of the skin metabolism. A **deficiency can lead to rough, dry and bristly fur** during the coat change.

## Supporting the horse with the right feed during the change of coat



A chore in spring and at the beginning of autumn: Only those who brush regularly and comprehensively can keep the horse's flowing coat in check during the change of coat (© Nadine Haase - stock.adobe.com).

Tailor-made feeding is the key to getting your horse through the change of coat. The basis of a ration suitable for the change of coat is - as is often the case - **high-quality roughage**. The adequate supply of hay or haylage maintains all digestive processes and thus creates optimal conditions to utilise the nutrients your horse needs.

In the case of older, sick or particularly stressed horses, in which the change of coat does not take place without problems, it is sometimes advisable to **increase the daily feed**. This should ensure that your horse gets all the nutrients it needs for the change of coat.

This way you can supplement your horse's daily ration with high-quality protein, omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin A or beta carotene during the change of coat (e.g. *deukavallo linseed vital*). You can also ensure your horse's increased basic supply during the change of coat with a **balanced mineral feed** (e.g. *deukavallo Mineral*). In the case of acute deficiencies, a high-dose supplementary feed can help to prevent a nutrient deficiency or compensate for existing ones (e.g. with the supplement *deukavallo Biotin+Zinc*).

## A smooth coat change also goes through the stomach

The change of coat puts a lot of strain on your horse's body. The **stomach and intestines** are also **particularly stressed during this time**. However, a smooth digestion is the basis for your horse to absorb all the necessary nutrients optimally. When feeding your horse during the change of coat, make sure to use **ingredients that promote digestion**. These include **linseed, soya hulls, apple pomace and wheat bran**. These components form mucilages that protect the stomach and intestinal mucosa, support the transport of the mash and are particularly easy to digest. Horse feeds with these valuable ingredients are *deukavallo linseed vital* or the mash *deukavallo apple mash*.

## Conclusion: Changing the horse's coat - a hairy affair?

- Horses change their coat twice a year. During this change of coat, your horse has an increased need for various nutrients.
- The following nutrients are particularly important at this time: vitamin A, beta carotene, proteins, biotin, zinc and omega-3 fatty acids.
- If the requirements are not covered by an adapted diet, problems can arise during the change of coat such as flabbiness, weight loss and various problems with the skin and digestion.
- Horse feeds that meet the needs of horses during the change of coat are available as mash (e.g. *deukavallo Apple Mash*), mineral feed (e.g. *deukavallo Mineral*), linseed mixtures (e.g. *deukavallo Linseed Vital*) or supplementary feed (e.g. *deukavallo Biotin+Zinc*) are available.
- Support your horse's change of coat with the right coat care - various home remedies can also support your horse during this phase.

## FAQ about your horse's coat change

### Which supplementary feed do I use to support my horse during the change of coat?

Horse feeds that support the change of coat are available as **mash, mineral feed or linseed mixtures** (e. g. *deukavallo linseed vital*, *deukavallo Mineral*). These feeds contain precisely balanced nutrients

such as zinc, biotin, vitamin A and proteins.

## When does the horse's coat change begin?

The change of coat is based on the **length of the days** (photoperiodism). The change begins with the **winter solstice** on 21 December and the **summer solstice** on 21 June and lasts for about three months.

## What helps a horse during the coat change?

You can help your horse to get rid of its coat quickly with **extensive grooming sessions**. If the coat change is very stressful, adjust your training and activity programme and **support it with suitable horse feed** (e.g. from deukavallo).

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