

Rugging Up a Horse



Disclaimer

A series of booklets (instructions for skills and flipped classroom materials) has been developed by the Clinical Skills Lab team (staff, recent graduates and students) from Bristol Veterinary School, University of Bristol, UK.

Please note:

- Each flipped classroom booklet includes ways to prepare for learning a skill in class; it is acknowledged that there are often other approaches. Before using the booklets, students should check with their university or college to determine whether the approaches illustrated are acceptable in their context or whether an alternative resources should be used.
- The booklets are made available in good faith and may be subject to changes.
- In using these booklets, you must adopt safe working procedures and take your own risk assessments (as and when appropriate), checked by your university, college etc. The University of Bristol will not be liable for any loss or damage resulting from failure to adhere to such practices.

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Equipment list:

Rugging up a Horse

Equipment for this station:

- Stable rug
- Model horse

Considerations for this station:

- Applying a stable rug to a model horse before practising with a live animal will enable you to become familiar with the rug and how to put it on correctly.
- There are useful equine skills lists and 'How to' videos on Blackboard that demonstrate this technique as well as other skills. These can be found in the Animal Management 1 section → eLearning and then navigate to the relevant documents & videos.
- Once you are confident applying a rug to the model, visit the Live Anatomy Barn to practise on a pony.

Anyone working in the Clinical Skills Lab must read the 'CSL_I01 Induction' and agree to abide by the 'CSL_I00 House Rules' & 'CSL_I02 Lab Area Rules'

Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.

Clinical Skills:

Anatomy of the stable rug

Back/tail end of rug (note this end is straight)

Webbing along
midline

Front/head
end (note this
end is sloped)

Fillet
string



Breast
strap

Surcingles (belly straps)



There is webbing along the midline of the rug and a V shape where the rug would sit at the withers. (Note webbing may be different colours on different rugs)

Velcro breast strap to secure the front of the rug. You may also see rugs with buckles and other fastenings.

Close up view of the front/head end of the rug.

Clinical Skills:

Rugging up a Horse

1



Select a stable rug. You will need to prepare (get the rug folded and ready to place on the horse i.e. steps 1-6) BEFORE you enter the stable with the horse.

Lay the rug over your knees or against your body so you are able to tie the surcingles without laying or dropping the rug on the ground, which may be wet or muddy.

2



Tie the surcingles together in a knot to stop them from hitting or spooking the horse when you apply the rug.

3



Once the surcingles have been tied, hold the rug (folded in half so that the outer surface of the rug is on the outside). Orientate yourself so you know which end is to be placed cranially (towards the head) and which end goes caudally. Please see 'anatomy of the stable rug' on the previous page for further clarification.

Hold the half folded rug in front of you with the head end in your right hand and the tail end in your left hand.

4



Pass the head end of the rug (in your right hand) to meet the tail end of the rug (in your left hand) by folding the rug back on itself so the inside is now exposed. You should now hold both the head and tail end together in your left hand.

5



Still holding the head and tail ends of the rug in your left hand, find the other end of the rug and hold this with your right hand.

6



The rug has now been folded into a quarter. The quarter of the rug facing away from you will be applied to the horse's left shoulder. Before applying you should check that the sloped edge (i.e. the shoulder part of the rug) is in your left hand. You are now ready to enter the stable and apply the rug to the horse.

Clinical Skills:

Rugging up a Horse



7
Now the rug is folded, you are ready to apply the rug to the horse. Make sure the horse is adequately restrained with a headcollar and lead rope and is being held by an assistant or tied up safely. Taking care not to scare the horse with the rug, approach the horse quietly from the left. Standing next to the horse's left shoulder, gently place the quarter of the rug which corresponds to the left shoulder against the horse.



8
Gently and quietly, pass the opposite quarter over the horse's withers so the front half of the rug is now unfolded. Aim to place the rug slightly too far forward and then adjust by pulling it backwards (i.e. moving in the same direction as the hair). If the rug is too far caudal, lift it to reposition. The rug should not be pulled cranially.



9
Then gently unfold the remaining half of the rug over the horse's back towards the tail, being careful not to startle the horse. Ensure the front half of the rug remains in place at the horse's withers.



10
Walk quietly around the front of the horse so you are on the horse's right side. DO NOT walk behind the horse or duck under the horse's neck or leadrope. Untie the surcingles so they are both hanging loosely and return to the horse's left side, again walking around the front of the horse.



11
Start by fastening the breast straps at the front end of the horse, under the neck. In this booklet the rug has a Velcro strap. Other rugs may have buckles or other variations of fastenings.



12
Fasten the surcingles underneath the abdomen diagonally i.e. fasten the right cranial strap to the left caudal clip and the right caudal strap to the left cranial clip. Ensure that the surcingle straps are not twisted before fastening. Stand next to the horse's flank when fastening the surcingles and ensure the horse is aware of your presence to avoid startling it.

Clinical Skills:

Rugging up a Horse

13



To fasten the surcingles insert the end of the surcingle strap vertically into the clip.

14



The surcingle should then be rotated 90 degrees so it is now horizontal and secured in the clip.

15



Standing close to the horse and at its left flank, lift up the tail and place it through the fillet string so the fillet string now lies underneath the tail.

Some rugs may have leg straps instead of a fillet string which would be fastened at this stage.

You should never stand behind the horse to fasten the leg straps or fillet string.

16



To remove the horse's rug, firstly undo all the straps. Start with the fillet string or leg straps (if present) then the surcingles. Unfasten the breast straps last. Stand next to the horse's flank when unfastening the leg and belly straps and ensure the horse is aware of your presence to avoid startling it.

17



Gently lift the front of the rug (at the withers) up and fold in half backwards, so the front half is over the back half (as shown in the photo).

18



Standing at the side of the horse, reach under the rug and gently remove the rug over the horse's bottom. Take care not to startle the horse with any sudden movements

Resetting the station: Rugging up a Horse

1. Neatly fold the rug and place it back where you found it.

Station ready for the next person:



Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.

I wish I'd known:

Rugging up a Horse

- Be careful not to startle the horse when putting on or removing a rug. Make all your movements slow and gentle and make the horse aware of your presence before attempting to put on a rug, fasten surcingle or leg straps, or remove a rug.
- Rugs come in different designs, with different straps and fasteners. Familiarise yourself with the type of rug you are going to use before applying it to the horse.
- Wear suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with horses e.g. safety boots and a hard hat.
- Approach a horse from the near side (the horse's left); this is an equine convention and therefore horses are used to such an approach.
- When moving around the horse (e.g. to fasten a strap, to check the rug on the right (far) side) do not walk under the horse's neck and never walk behind the horse – this is dangerous.