

# Horse Trails and Tales

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## *Horse Keeping in a Tough Economy*

Everyone is suffering to some extent in the current economy. Trying to hold things together to both keep your horse(s) and provide optimal care can be particularly challenging. Challenging – not impossible.

Some expenses are set, but numbers not written in stone. If you can't keep your horse at home and need to board, you have options. Instead of full care boarding, investigate pasture board or stall only arrangements where you do the mucking and grooming yourself. Even when bedding is factored in, this is usually a much more affordable situation. Even if you need a particular feature some of the time, like an indoor arena in winter, you can board elsewhere other times of the year.

If you are buying hay from a local broker or farm stores, you are paying way too much. Just yesterday, we put up the first cutting timothy and orchard grass from a neighbor's fields for \$3.00/bale (small square bales, about 45 to 50 pounds). That's less than 50% of what the brokers are getting for "premium" hay that really isn't.

If you don't have direct access to a hay grower, you almost certainly will to an auction. Loads of hay of 1 ton and up will be for sale. A ton of hay will last an average size horse in light to moderate work with little grain feeding at least 100 days. You'll pay from 25 to 50% less than you would at a broker. An empty 10 x 10 stall will hold a ton of hay, or convert any outside storage area to hay using pallets to stack bales (free from construction/architect sites), or rent space from a local farmer. The larger the load you buy, the bigger the savings, so consider going in with some friends.

*Do you need to buy pricey grain mixes or balancers from commercial manufacturers to guarantee your horse gets all the nutrients he needs?*

*Absolutely not.*

## *Easy Tips*

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- Investigate boarding alternatives
- Consider doing some of the boarding work yourself
- Purchase hay from a farmer or from the auction
- Review the supplements your horse "needs". Consider alternatives
- Instead of replacing costly barn items, consider using alternatives, such as baking soda for cleaning, or petroleum jelly for multitudes of uses
- Consider using generic alternatives to dewormers
- Talk to your vet about how frequently they need to visit your horse to consider you a client

Do you need to buy pricey grain mixes or balancers from commercial manufacturers to guarantee your horse gets all the nutrients he needs? Absolutely not. You do need to know what you're doing though. Since 2008, when the first NRC Plus course at [www.drkellon.com](http://www.drkellon.com) started, I've taught over 1000 people how to balance their horse's diet and create a supplement and feeding plan that is customized to their needs – for a fraction of previous costs and with superior results. There's free ongoing support for all students.

You can also eliminate many more minor, but still potentially high sticker price, items with some ingenuity. Baking soda is great for cleaning bits, scrubbing buckets and troughs, deodorizing stalls, gently lifting stains from coats, absorbing all sorts of spills, soothing bug bites or stings and even removing metal corrosion.

Simple petroleum jelly is another staple. It keeps superficial scrapes and abrasions from drying out but does much more. It's an excellent barrier to biting flies and midges in the ears, on the midline and at the tail base. Use it to help extricate burrs and knots from the mane and tail. Slather it under open wounds to prevent scalding of the lower tissues. Protect

coronary bands and heel bulbs from harsh hoof medications. Coat the hoof wall before shampooing your horse to prevent stripping of the oils, then remove the excess for a nice conditioning effect. Run out of leather conditioner? Try petroleum jelly. It also lubricates hinges, latches and jar/can lids, preventing corrosion at the same time.

Learn which dewormers are most effective then buy generic. By law, it's the same stuff inside the tube whether it's in a fancy box or a plain plastic covering.

Build a relationship with a veterinary practice by honestly discussing your situation. Find out what they require to consider you a regular client. It may be as little as one visit a year. That will give you access to emergency care and basic prescription medications, like phenylbutazone or flunixin/Banamine.

I went to veterinary school to help horses – and I want to help you do that.

*Eleanor Kellon, VMD*

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