

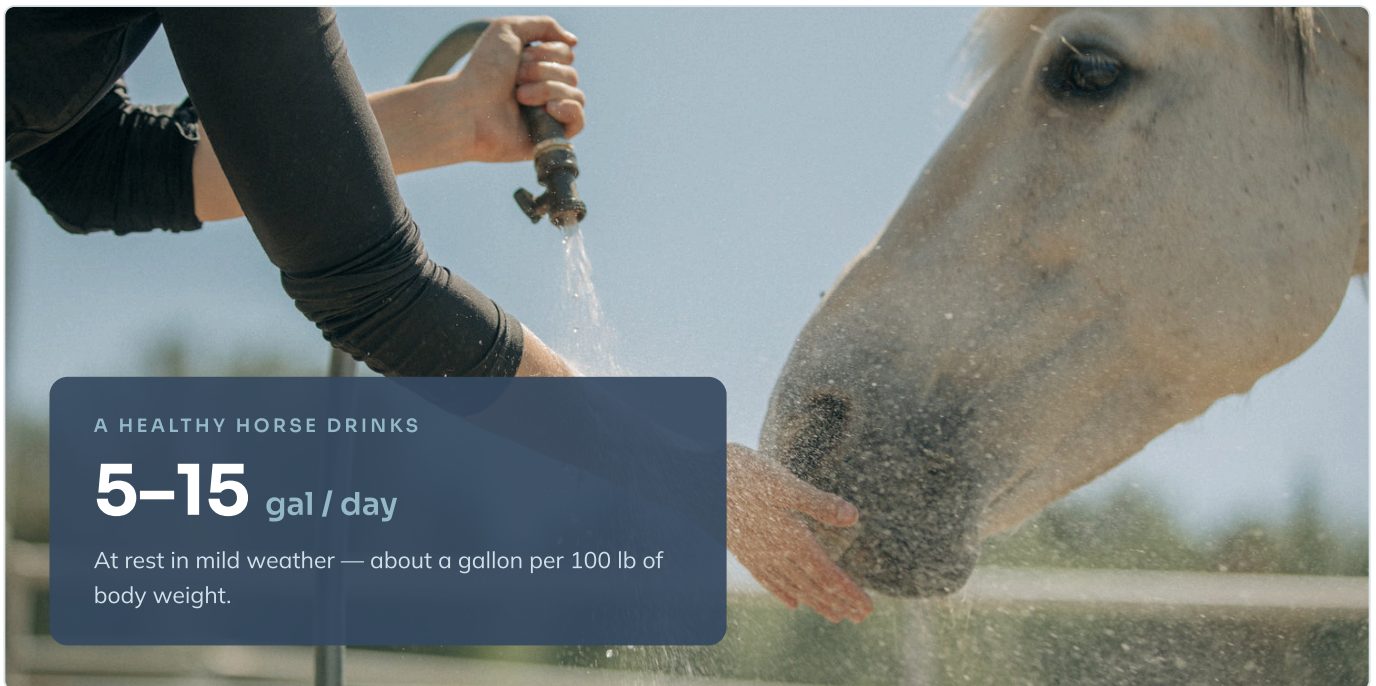


WATER SMARTER.

THE HYDRATION GUIDE

How much should my horse really be drinking?

A simple guide to normal water intake, what changes it, and the early warning signs every owner should know.



A HEALTHY HORSE DRINKS

5–15 gal / day

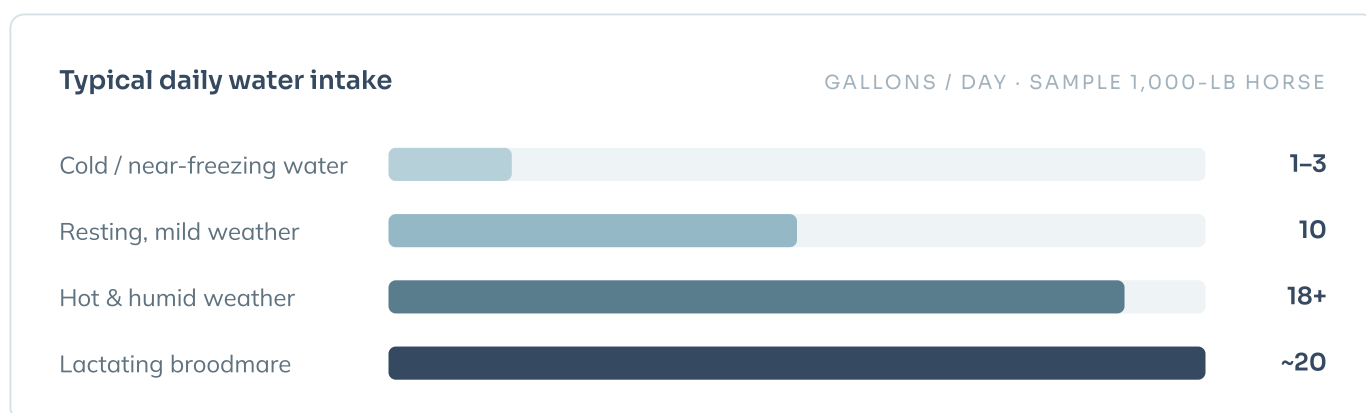
At rest in mild weather — about a gallon per 100 lb of body weight.

Why this number matters

Your horse can survive weeks without food, but only **3–6 days without water**. And a change in how much they drink is often the very first sign something's wrong — long before they look unwell. The trick is knowing what's normal for *your* horse, so you can catch the moment it shifts.

What "normal" looks like

At rest in mild weather, most adult horses drink **5–15 gallons a day** — roughly a gallon per 100 pounds of body weight. So a 1,000-pound horse needs about 10 gallons of water daily.



That baseline moves with several factors:

- **Workload, pregnancy & lactation** all push the number up. Broodmares may need ~20 gallons while producing milk, and sweating horses need more than idle ones.
- **Water temperature** — horses prefer it around 45–65°F and drink less when it's too cold or too warm.
- **Weather** — horses need more water in excessive heat to replace what's lost to sweat.
- **Size** — a miniature horse needs and consumes far less than a full-size one.
- **Diet** — dry hay means more drinking to keep the gut moving; lush pasture (50–90% moisture) requires less.

And every horse has its own habits. What's an emergency for one can be perfectly normal for another.

Water in > Water out

A horse's body is about **70% water**, and it's draining away around the clock — which is exactly why steady drinking matters so much. Water leaves through several routes at once:

Where the water goes

DAILY LOSSES · SAMPLE 1,000-LB HORSE

◆ Manure

up to 5 gal / day



The biggest and most overlooked. The gut is the horse's largest water reservoir — and dry hay pushes the loss even higher.

◆ Urine

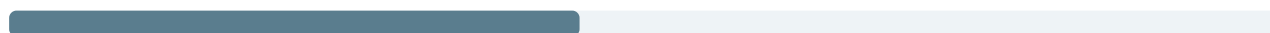
steady



The kidneys flush waste, excess salt and excess protein — carrying water out along with them.

◆ Breathing & skin

a few gal / day



A few gallons evaporate every day through the lungs and skin — even when there's no visible sweat at all.

◆ Sweat *the wild card*

0 → several gal / hr



Near zero at rest — but a horse working hard in the heat can lose up to several gallons an hour.

◆ Milk *nursing mares only*

large share



A nursing broodmare loses a large share to milk production — which is why her needs run well above normal.

ALL OF IT MUST BE REPLACED BY

Drinking + a little moisture from feed

WATER OUT



WATER IN

When losses climb — heat, work, illness, a nursing foal — intake has to climb too, or a horse falls behind fast. **That balance is the whole game**, and the rest of this guide is about keeping it even.

Weather and work change their needs — and their habits

HOT WEATHER

Needs can roughly **double to 18+ gallons**. Humidity makes it worse — sweat can't evaporate, so the horse keeps losing fluid without cooling down.

EXERCISE

Hard work means heavy sweat loss, and sweat carries **electrolytes*** with it — so water alone may not be enough.

COLD — THE SNEAKY ONE

Horses drink less in cold, often as they switch to dry hay and need *more*. Near-freezing water can drop intake to **1–3 gallons** — the classic setup for impaction colic.

Studies show horses take in roughly **40% more water** when it's warmed versus near-freezing. One quirk: offered both, many horses pick the cold bucket... then drink less of it. So give them warmed water, and don't leave an icy bucket sitting right next to it.

A quick word on electrolytes...

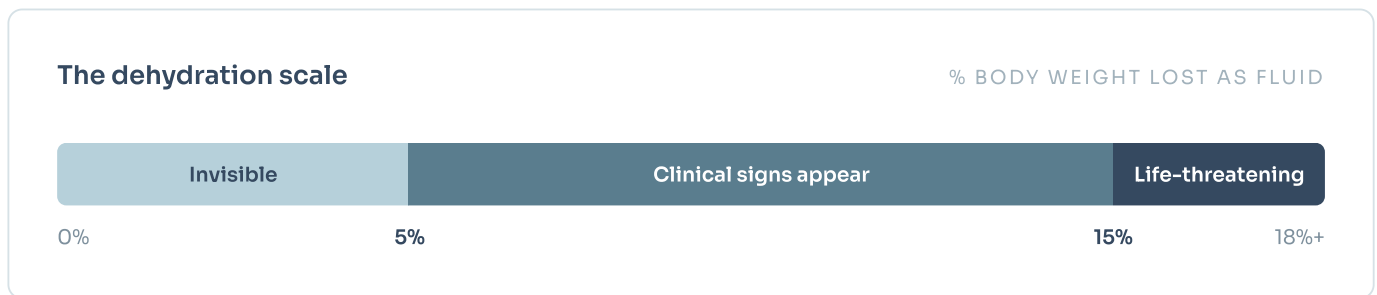
Electrolytes are minerals — mainly sodium, chloride and potassium — that carry a small electrical charge. They run the behind-the-scenes work that keeps a horse going: balancing fluids in and out of cells, firing nerves and muscles, and triggering the thirst response.

The catch: horse sweat is *salty* — it pulls these minerals out along with the water. Replace only the water and the blood becomes too diluted, which can switch off thirst before they've fully rehydrated. That's why water alone sometimes isn't enough after heavy sweating.

How to replace them: offer free-choice salt (loose salt beats a hard block for most horses), and add a horse-specific electrolyte supplement during hot weather, hard work or travel. One rule always holds — electrolytes only help *alongside* fresh water, never instead of it.

Catching dehydration before you can see it

Here's what most owners don't realize: by the time a horse *shows* clinical signs of dehydration, they've been dehydrated for a while. Below about 5% of body weight in fluid loss, it's essentially invisible on a physical exam. Call it **pre-dehydration**. For a 1,000-lb horse, 5% is roughly a 6-gallon deficit — and only ~12 more gallons of loss separate the first symptoms from the end of the line.



So how do we catch the pre-dehydration stage? **At the input phase — literally how much your horse is drinking.** Watch for:

- A **drop below normal intake** — the most direct signal there is.
- Fewer or smaller drinks.
- Longer-than-normal stretches with no drinking.
- Flat intake on days when heat or exercise should have driven it up.

At this phase, a hydration trigger like salt or electrolytes — or a little extra moisture from a soupy mash or fresh grass — is often all it takes to bring things back into balance.

The hands-on checks — for when signs do show

Skin pinch test

Pinch the shoulder skin — it should flatten in ~1.5 sec. Longer than 4 seconds? Call your vet.

Gums

Should be pink, moist and smooth — not pale, dry or tacky.

Capillary refill

Press the gum and release — color should return in 1–2 seconds.

If your horse shows any clinical sign of dehydration — even if they've been drinking — call your vet and monitor closely.

How far off "normal" is too far?

It's more about changes from *your horse's* baseline than a fixed number of gallons. But the usual red flags:

- A **full day of little to no drinking** is always a concern; dehydration can appear within about two days without water.
- Changes in **normal drinking behavior** — e.g. she always drinks after grain, but today she didn't.
- A **sharp drop** — intake cut roughly in half or more. Day-to-day variation is normal; look for the dramatic or prolonged change.
- **Flat intake on a hot or hard-working day** means they're falling behind. Watch over 24–48 hours to make sure they catch up.

Some horses dip and sip all day; others guzzle it all in a few big sessions. Learning your horse's normal tells you whether to panic or relax.

When dehydration is most likely to strike

01 Cold snaps — less drinking plus dry hay equals impaction risk

02 Hot, humid weather and hard work

03 Travel and shows — stress and unfamiliar water

04 Illness — fever, diarrhea, or going off feed

05 Water problems — frozen, dirty, spooky, scarce or hard to drink

06 Seniors, broodmares and lactating mares

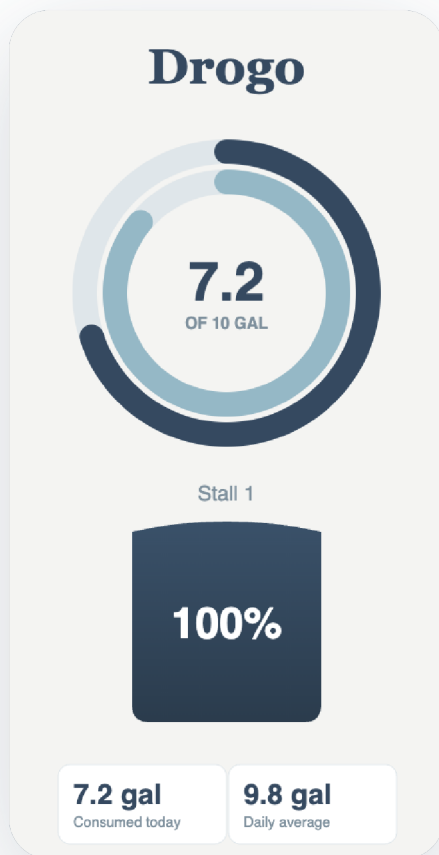
The catch: can you actually see the number?

Staying ahead of dehydration depends on one thing: knowing how much your horse is drinking. Standard automatic waterers hide that number. Buckets show more, but only if you fill, dump and tally by hand every day. Most of us end up guessing, or waiting for the clinical signs to appear.

HOW CASCADA TURNS A GUESS INTO A NUMBER

The invisible early stage becomes visible.

Cascada is an automatic waterer with an app that measures the water your horse *actually* drinks — daily totals, trends, and what's normal for your horse. Here's what you see at a glance:



LIVE IN THE APP · DROGO, STALL 1

Hydration Rings

The light-blue inner ring is your horse's normal progress toward his average daily intake *by this time of day*; the dark-blue outer ring shows where he actually is. Close the rings and the day's hydration is complete — an at-a-glance read on whether he's keeping up.

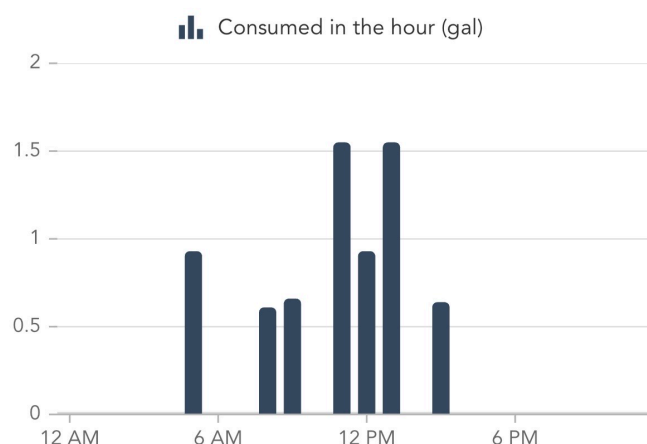
Bucket Water Level

See exactly how much water is in the bucket without walking out to check it — the quiet reassurance of knowing, at any moment, that your horse has plenty of fresh water in front of him.

Consumption Cards

Your numbers at a glance: total water consumed today and how many times he's taken a drink, shown next to his rolling averages so you instantly know whether today is tracking high or low.

Hourly Hydration



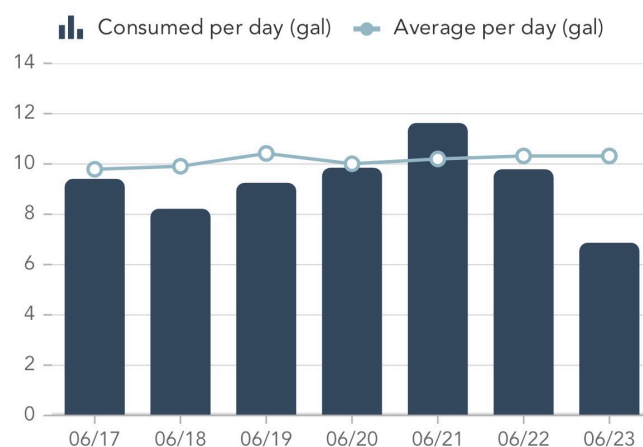
Hourly Graph

When and how much he drinks, hour by hour. Is he a sipper or a guzzler? Does he drink after a ride or after his grain? Is your hydration trigger actually working? This is how you know.

Daily Graph

His total daily intake across the past week, plotted against a two-week rolling-average line. Scroll back through earlier weeks to see how weather or a change in routine shifted his drinking.

Daily Hydration



Because Cascada fills a **standard water bucket**, you get all of this without sacrificing the time savings of an autowaterer or the comfort of a familiar bucket. **That's peace of mind, on tap.**

Curious what your horse's real numbers look like?

See how Cascada makes hydration visible.

cascadaequine.com →

Sources

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CASCADA

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