
☐ Christmas Cheer - Equestrian Style ☐

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Yes please! Not just for *all* the food or the much-needed face cream that magically appears under the tree, but for the simple joy of not having to rush around doing my horse in darkness before and after work. Eight blissful days where I'll actually have time to apply said face cream to my weathered skin before embarking on a morning of being wind-blasted while poo-picking, riding and catching up with everyone at the yard!

Time to spoil my horse, too – a fresh clip, tidy mane, a touch of hoof oil, and some extra scratches for good measure.

Two months after the trauma of the clocks changing, the Christmas holidays give us a brief but glorious respite from the darkness we've been enduring, before the longest month of the year – January – sets in. Instead of trudging through muddy gateways pushing a hay-laden barrow by the light of a head torch, we get to squint in *daylight* as the hay blows back into our faces while we make sure they've got plenty of forage to keep them warm and happy.

The Christmas break means long rides in crisp sunshine, belting out Mariah Carey as I sweep the yard with the broom as my microphone, and having time to *actually* groom my horse rather than hauling drenched rugs on and off in record time. Too much? Maybe I should have gone with Wham.

Christmas morning tradition? Riding over to the neighbours on my tinsel-clad best friend for a mug of mulled wine while the turkey slowly browns in the oven. Who says no to mulled wine at 11 a.m. on Christmas Day, right? Warm mince pies scoffed (heaven), and we return home with slightly rosier cheeks. Slightly tipsy, my girl gets an extra lunch of [SPILLERS SPEEDY-MASH Fibre](#) (open in new tab), lovingly mixed with parsnips, apples, and carrots stolen from the over-ambitious festive food shop.

I love having time for hacks with friends, quoting Gavin & Stacey (I mean, I am called Ness), and deciding who's most likely to fall asleep first on New Year's Eve as Graham Norton takes us to Big Ben. Freshly clipped, winter wind whipping under the exercise blanket Father Christmas bought her, we're cantering sideways down the lane. Car drivers always seem much happier to slow down and give a wide berth when you're dressed in a Santa tunic, elf leggings, and a festive grin. Haven't tried it yet? Highly recommend - though be warned, those leggings you impulse-bought after one too many Instagram ads are very slippery. Perhaps that's the morning mulled wine...

Once upon a time, New Year's Day began with one of the equestrian world's greatest challenges - a day's hunting with a hideous hangover, trying to hold onto a very fresh horse in freezing drizzle after little sleep. Type 2 fun! My advice: wear that extra layer, and be kind to the designated driver (or patient parent) waiting in the cold for a grey-faced,

nauseous you to return – hopefully still with your horse.

These days, older-and-wiser me prefers a quiet canter through the forest or sneaking off for a lesson while the other half takes the kids to football. Bliss.



Top tip:

When someone asks what you want for Christmas and you can't think of anything, picture how heavenly those soft new welly socks will feel when you inevitably face-plant into gateway mud in darkness come January 2nd. Who needs face cream when you've got nature's own mud mask? Though perhaps this year, I'll ask Santa for *mud mats*.

□ Your turn!

We'd love to hear what you and your horse enjoy most during the festive season. Share your funniest Christmas story or photo with us on Facebook or Instagram for a chance to **win a bag of SPILLERS treats** to pop in your horse's stocking!

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