

Ice Safety Strategies

Dealing with ice has always been a challenge in the Northern parts of the US. In fact, an ice storm can effect most of the non-tropical world. When your pasture or runs are coated with a slick sheet of ice, and you are wondering what will work to keep your herd safe, take a look at some of the strategies we've tested:

1. Sand - \$4 dollars
2. Fine salt/mixing salt - \$6 dollars
3. Course salt (usually for water softeners) - \$6 dollars
4. Barn Lime - \$3 dollars
5. Chicken Grit - \$9 dollars
6. Dirty Shavings - Priceless!

Here's how these different options stacked up:

Sand.

While you'd think that this would give the best grip, it doesn't stick to the ice, so it smeared with every step. This is not recommended, it was still quite slippery.

Fine salt.

The second we put this down, we could hear it start to crackle and pop. There is an instant effect and greatly increased traction.

Course ground salt.

This made some popping and cracking noises right away, but there wasn't nearly as much traction as the fine salt.

Barn lime.

It created decent traction, but that traction was instant.

Chicken grit.

Many horse people have chickens too, so we gave this a try. There was some traction gained, but mediocre, at best.

Dirty Shavings.

If applied when the shavings were damp, they stuck to the ice well, and gave very good traction. If the shavings were dry, they were more slippery.

The bottom line:

Fine salt. Available at most feed stores, it's cheap and easy to spread. Fine salt gave instant traction and stuck well to the slickest ice. Also, if your horse ingests the salt, there's no harm. We recommend keeping a bag or two around the barn.