

Winter is the worst time for respiratory health.

Holly Grayton - Flexineb

It is undeniable, winter is coming. Each year when it rolls around, we spend a lot of time thinking about keeping ourselves and the horses warm, but perhaps not enough time thinking about what happens for our respiratory systems when we close the barn doors and windows.

It was an interesting experience for me this fall when we were still wearing masks for COVID, I noticed quite a difference in my own allergies in the barn from simply wearing my mask while doing barn chores. I didn't sneeze or have that dry throat thing where I'm always reaching for my water bottle.

I can only assume the horses experience some sort of the same thing. In our barn we like to turn out before we clean the barn, mostly to make stable cleaning easier for us, but also so the horses aren't breathing in all the dust of shavings being thrown around. It isn't always possible to do that with all horses, but if you can it helps. But there are other things you can do to help keep the dust down too: water down your hay, sprinkle the aisle with a watering can and some PineSol before you sweep, sprinkle the stalls after you bed them, and never use a leaf-blower with a horse in the barn! These small things can be very helpful keeping

the dust down for you and your horse's breathing – notice the difference it makes in how often you have to clean and dust the stall bars!

We currently have one horse recovering from colic surgery, so he doesn't go out first thing before we clean the stables. In this situation we simply put on the Flexineb nebulizer while the barn is getting cleaned. The nebulizer is a really simple way to give your horse's lungs a good clean out, so to speak, in a very user-friendly way that doesn't take too long.

It is very important to have air flow in the barn even if that means some heat escaping – it is a necessary evil for a healthy barn. We keep all our windows

open at least an inch even in the coldest weather. We also have exhaust fans in our barn that are connected to a humidistat which helps to recirculate air and keep damp and stale air to a minimum.

We spend so much time and energy keeping

these horses healthy, but respiratory health is a harder one to manage because we can't see it! But just like any other athlete a healthy respiratory system is fundamental to competing at the highest level and is worth taking some steps to take care.

