



Season's Greetings

It's not easy being on the cutting edge. Closed minds and controversy lurk at even the most progressive facilities. Apathy and ignorance make new ideas sound outlandish and alarmist. Disinformation and baseless remedies abound. The only defense is the proverbial good offense...come armed with the science, and inform those who are intelligent enough to listen and make their own decision. In time, the undeniable successes prove the point for you. The hardest part is being patient while the changes take place. The best part is watching the horses heal, thrive, and go on to become shining examples of what we've tried so hard to make others understand.

Thank you for being one of the brave ones.

Nutrition Facts & Myths

Remember when everyone started feeding corn oil? And then it was cider vinegar to prevent enteroliths (stones). Then the glucosamine trend started...first oral, then injected. Feeding garlic is still popular, and recently, cinnamon has been touted for insulin resistant horses. Rice bran is still a hit. Now it's ground flax seed, and Yucca. So what's behind these trends? Are they good ideas, and if so, what benefits do they offer? If not, what are the risks?

Corn Oil

Corn oil has become popular as an inexpensive way to add fat calories to the diet. It has also been touted as a preventative for ulcers and gastritis, and as a buffer when feeding bute.

Is corn oil really a good choice for adding calories? In a word: no. High fat/oil intake has the potential to interfere with fiber fermentation. Fat that escapes digestion in the small intestine can have a negative effect on the numbers of microorganisms in the large bowel, and on fiber digestion. Studies differ in their conclusions about how much is too much, and the ceiling for fat digestion in the small bowel has not been determined. However, diets containing over 15 to 20%

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Happy Holidays,
Maria, Kirk, and the Herd

I do this for the horse.

- Ray Hunt

fat are generally considered to have the potential to negatively affect hind gut function.

The research done on the effect of corn oil on general ulcers/gastritis in horses is conflicting, and therefore doesn't highly recommend it. For every study that found a marginal protective effect, another negated the finding.

Corn oil to prevent the detrimental effects of bute? Simply not true. Bute impacts the hindgut. Because horses digest fat extremely efficiently, oils are almost 100% digested and absorbed in the small bowel and never make it to the hind gut.

If you must feed corn oil, use no more than 4 to 6 oz. per day, EVER, and then only as a last resort for horses in dire need of calories when other options are simply not available.

Cider Vinegar

It's long been believed that a cup of apple cider vinegar given orally once a day over grain or forage is a valid way to prevent enteroliths (intestinal stones) in horses by raising the acidity in the colon. However, the efficacy of this remedy has never been documented.

One of the potential problems with feeding cider vinegar is that it can enhance iron absorption by increasing acidity in the gut. (Incidentally, adding vitamin C to the horse's diet can have the same effect. Horses very effectively produce their own vitamin C, and it is rarely something that needs to be added.) Most of our domestic horses are already ingesting far more iron than they need, and have no way to excrete the excess. Iron overload can cause myriad metabolic issues. A better solution to preventing stones? Stop feeding straight alfalfa, and avoid feeding large quantities of wheat bran.

Glucosamine

Glucosamine in combination with chondroitin sulfate offers a documented protective effect for joint health. It's important to understand that the two together have been shown to work better than either substance alone. This combination is a good choice for horses with degenerative joint disease.

While research on glucosamine supplementation in horses is scarce, research in other species has demonstrated a link between glucosamine and insulin resistance. Until recently, the link was thought to be related to intravenous and intramuscular glucosamine only, but a study published in 2007 showed the same effect with oral glucosamine. In horses with insulin resistance, laminitis, or Cushing's disease, glucosamine in any form is contraindicated.

Garlic

The idea that garlic might be an effective insect repellent has long been popular for dogs and cats. Now horses are alienating their herdmates, if not the insects, with their garlic breath. The effectiveness of feeding garlic is limited at best, and, like onions, garlic can actually be dangerous for horses. Adding garlic has been shown to cause Heinz Body Anemia in horses. Garlic may be undesirable for horses with insulin resistance, as well. Some studies have shown certain garlic extracts lowering insulin, but others have shown an increase in insulin.

Cinnamon

Cinnamon has been shown to reduce blood sugar in some horses. While it has not been conclusively shown to reduce insulin levels, it seems to have become a popular practice amongst owners of Cushing's horses to feed cinnamon. It is so effective at lowering blood

sugar, though, that it can actually be dangerous...as little as a tablespoon can cause blood sugar levels below what is healthful. Cinnamon should ONLY be used to lower blood glucose levels, NOT to lower insulin levels.

Rice Bran

Brans in general are very high in phosphorous, and rice bran is no exception, although it is not as phosphorous rich as wheat bran. If you are feeding a high-calcium diet, rice bran can be a good choice for adding phosphorous and magnesium to balance the calcium. However, many of the rice bran products available for horses have calcium added to balance the high phosphorous in the bran.

Rice bran is also typically quite high in non-structural carbohydrates (NSC), averaging between 17 and 25%, and is therefore not recommended for horses with insulin resistance issues, laminitis, or Cushing's disease. Still, it is lower in NSC than wheat bran, which averages 22 - 29%, making it a better choice unless your goal is to really boost phosphorous.

Rice bran can be an easy, economical way to add dense calories without adding as much sugar and carbs as grains. Just be sure to consider the calcium / phosphorous / magnesium balance, and don't feed rice bran to horses with insulin resistance, laminitis, or Cushing's.

Ground Flax Seed

Flax has become very popular recently. Rumors have begun to circulate about the alleged dangers of flax; one of these refers to a precursor to cyanide that is present in raw ground flax. While the ground flax does indeed contain cyanogenic glycosides, the horse's stomach acid renders them harmless. Flax is actually quite safe for horses. Ground flax seed provides omega 3 fatty acids that hay lacks, but that are necessary in the horse's diet. There is even evidence suggesting that omega-3 fatty acids may be beneficial for horses with Cushing's disease, and may enhance fertility.

Yucca

Yucca seems to be cropping up in a lot of supplements these days. A search for "yucca" on SmartPakEquine.com yields 31 different products, ranging from joint supplements to anti-inflammatories to weight builders. While it does indeed have anti-inflammatory properties, yucca's corticosteroid effect can mimic or exacerbate insulin resistance and Cushing's disease. It is not recommended for horses with laminitis, insulin resistance, or Cushing's.

Barefoot Spotlight: Success Stories

This is what it's all about...

ANOUK, FRIESIAN MARE

Mysterious, intermittent lameness brought Anouk to barefoot. She showed the telltale signs of low grade laminitis, and her hind feet were radically imbalanced. Anouk scored 8's for her gaits at a recent dressage show!



BOXER, PAINT GELDING

Boxer was sound shod, but barefoot made sense to his owner. Even with an old heel bulb injury that left him with a big part of his lateral heel missing, his transition was smoothly successful.

Five months later, Boxer is jumping without boots.

He won the jump off at 4 ft at his last show!

BLAZE, TWH GELDING

When I first met Blaze eight years ago, one of the things that struck me about this big, gorgeous tobiano was his incredible feet. Fast forward to two months ago, when I ran in to Blaze again...the change was dramatic. His feet were a mess...radically long toes, and badly underrun heels. He was having difficulty in his gaits, laboring in his four beats, and his canter was unbalanced and obviously hard for him. It took simply pulling his shoes and applying one good trim to turn things back around. Blaze is once again gaiting like a machine, and performing his smooth, rocking horse canter.





CALICO, PAINT MARE

After she came up lame, Calico's X-rays showed a lesion to the deep digital flexor tendon, and fluid in the medullary cavity...classic harbingers of navicular disease. She now logs lots of trail miles, barefoot and sound!

OSCAR, DRAFT CROSS GELDING

Oscar was not wearing shoes, but neither was he wearing an appropriate trim. He had great difficulty picking up one lead. After his first trim, the lead problem disappeared!

I could fill this whole newsletter with similar stories...

What can barefoot do for YOUR horse??



Equine Links Worth Bookmarking

A smattering of the most visited sites in my personal Internet Bookmarks...

Ask the Vet Blog with Lydia F. Gray, DVM, FA

<http://www.askthevetblog.com/>

Dr. Lydia Gray is the Medical Director for SmartPak. Her blog offers a question and answer format, and covers the gamut of horse health.

The Australian Brumby Research Unit

<http://www.wildhorseresearch.com>

Chris Pollitt, BVSc, PhD, head of the Australian Equine Laminitis Research Unit at the University of Queensland, and one of the leading laminitis researchers in the world today, heads up this project. The Australian Brumby Research Unit strives to better understand the horse's hoof by studying it in its natural state in the feral horses, the Brumbies, of Australia. The Unit publishes a monthly newsletter describing their work and findings.

Eclectic Horseman Magazine

<http://eclectic-horseman.com/>

Probably the only cross-discipline horsemanship publication dedicated to a more thinking approach. Excellent articles,

few advertisements, and an excellent website that's easy to navigate and loaded with quality information.

Pete & Ivy Ramey's Hoof Rehab.com

<http://www.hoofrehab.com>

Want to learn what barefoot hoof care is all about? Visit Pete's site and go to the Articles link. Everything in Pete's highly acclaimed DVD series is right there, free, for you to read.

Dr. Eleanor Kellon on Equine Nutrition

<http://www.drkellon.com>

Dr. Kellon is one of the foremost authorities on equine nutrition and an expert in the field of applications of nutraceuticals for horses. Lucky for the general horse owning public, veterinary community, and other equine professionals, she offers a range of courses on equine nutrition, including *Nutrition Requirements of Horses*, *Nutrition as Therapy*, *Nutrition for the Performance Horse*, and more. The courses are not just a lay person's guide to feeding your backyard horse, but are instead quite in depth, and qualify for American Veterinary Association of State Boards Registry of Approved Continuing Education (AAVSB RACE), United States Dressage Federation (USDF), and Equinology credit.

Help! My Horse Won't Eat His Supplements!

So you've done the right thing, analyzed your horse's diet, and gone to the trouble and expense of having a custom supplement formulated to neatly fill in the gaps. But how the heck do you get your horse to actually EAT the new supplement?? What's a good base and flavoring for the powdered mineral blends that won't throw a monkey wrench into the careful nutrition calculations? Here are some ideas to get your horses gobbling up their new rations.

Start with a good, simple base. A small amount of soaked, rinsed beet pulp works nicely. But be sure to rinse the beet pulp thoroughly to remove the abundance of iron and molasses it contains first. Bermuda pellets are good, too; add a little water and the supplement and mix well just before serving.

Now, some horses will lick the bucket clean with nothing more added. But many more will turn up their noses when they get a whiff of the not-so-tasty minerals, like Morris the Cat in the old 9 Lives catfood commercials...time for the old finicky act! What to do??

First of all, introduce the new supplement gradually over a period of weeks. If they still eye their rations suspiciously, flavoring to increase palatability and mask the smell might be in order.

I personally use about two ounces of Cocosoya oil. Cocosoya masks the smell of medicines and supplements, and apparently it tastes great too. I have not yet met a horse that doesn't love the stuff, and it provides essential fatty acids hay lacks. But it can be messy, and while it's fairly economical, it might not be the best choice if you're in a situation where moistening the base is not an option.

If cocosoya doesn't fit your situation, a study completed in 2005 identified a list of horses' favorite flavors. The top eight according to the study:

1. fenugreek
2. banana
3. cherry
4. rosemary
5. cumin
6. carrot
7. peppermint
8. oregano



Fenugreek (which imparts a maple flavor), rosemary, cumin, and oregano all have strong smells, and are readily available at the local grocery store in powdered form. Pure peppermint extract powder or oil is available at specialty shops and online.

Experiment a little, and you're likely to find one that your horse can't resist. Use a very small amount; all of the powdered forms are concentrated and powerful, and most of the herbs here have some type of medicinal use; too much is probably not advisable.

*A great pleasure in life is doing
what people say you cannot do.*

-Walter Bagehot

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About Maria...

My name is Maria Siebrand. A lifelong student of the horse, and a serious information junky, I reside in San Diego, California. With a background in the life science and software industry, publishing electronic submissions to the FDA, among other things, I have a bit of a bent for research. When my corporate career derailed after my third layoff in as many years, I realized it was time to turn my energy back to horses full time.

Ever dissatisfied with the stodgy traditionalist thinking still dominating equine training, veterinary care, and hoof care, I couldn't help but dig deep to find

better alternatives for the horses I knew and loved. The information – the knowledge – is out there, and it seems to be gradually percolating up through the stubborn layers of “but we've always done it this way”. If I can help it perk just a bit faster, I will have served my beloved horses well.

I offer barefoot hoof care services, foundation training and horsemanship lessons in the greater San Diego area.

Interested? Please contact me at 619-865-9614 or maria@thoughtfulhorseman.com

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