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Al Mu'Barak Shaikh still in great form!

While **Al Mu'Barak Shaikh** won the "Best conditioned Horse" in no less than 4 endurance events during 2010, congratulations are again due to Shaikh and Louise Jordaan who recently competed in the FEI and ERASA accredited Mogale Endurance Event.



Louise and Shaikh not only won the 80km FEI "No Weight" category in a time of 3hr 55min (the fastest time over all categories), but were also awarded "Best Conditioned Horse" in the 80km FEI No Weight category as well as the "Best of the Best" all categories award.

Theo & Elize Jordaan from the Telize Arabian stud use the combination of **Equus Cool 'n Perform 12** and **Equus Race 'n Replace** for all their endurance horses and **Train 'n Leisure** as well as **All Time Balancer** for all their breeding stock and young horses in the stud.

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A Sad Farewell

All at Equus would like to convey their heartfelt condolences to Nickweb Clydesdale Stud and Sandy Weber on the loss of their beloved Olivia to suspected African Horse Sickness at the beginning of February. A magnificent, gentle giant, she leaves a space in the hearts of all who knew her. To all our readers, a reminder to be vigilant and to watch your horses for signs of this terrible disease.



Feed Prices on the Rise?

Horse owners countrywide will unfortunately soon experience a general increase in feed prices. Depending on the brand, some might already be paying more or will be paying more very soon. Some brands will have one big increase and others will implement a series of smaller increases. The reason for this is the actual increase in commodity prices worldwide, and is not linked to specific companies' inflation adjustments or hedge against annual cost increases in general. The general increase of the price of raw materials is thus likely to affect all manufacturers within a short space of time.

Often, during times of increased prices, many horse owners look for ways to save and are specifically tempted by some of the "budget brands" available. We hope that this short article will assist in providing perspective on the price increases as well as help you make informed decisions. (See also Equus January newsletter article "[is my Horse Feed too Expensive](#)" which discusses the dangers of poorer quality products).

It is often difficult to evaluate price comparisons because within any given period there are huge price differences between products anyway. In January 2011, a commonly used brand of 12% protein cubes sold for around R130/50kg in Gauteng, but at the same time, another well known 12% protein mix sold at R133 for only 22.5 kg which is less than half the weight.

Apart from the normal price differences (which are mostly quality driven) you will also note that different products do not always increase in price at the same rate. The reason for this is that feeds can be broken down into four main components:

- 1) Energy component – cereal grains and their byproducts such as bran.
- 2) Protein component – sunflower, soya, canola etc.
- 3) Fibre component– lucerne, oaten hay, teff grass etc.
- 4) Vitamins and minerals.

During periods when proteins become more expensive, higher protein products (Balancers and 14% to 16% Protein Feeds) rise proportionally more than lower Protein feeds, whereas during periods when the prices of energy sources increase, other products higher in these will rise proportionally more.

A brief overview of the current situation.

Commodity prices increasing worldwide!

Unfortunately we are now moving into a period where most components are on the rise.

- Energy prices are soaring because of the high international price of maize and current record maize prices in the USA which remains the main driver of energy prices worldwide. The season ending stocks in the USA is the lowest it has been in 15 years and the *stock to use ratio* is now at 5% (less than a 3 week supply). This very tight supply situation coupled with fears of drought as well as floods in other main energy producing areas in the world (Argentina and China) is also driving the SA maize market to very high levels, which in turn pushes up all energy prices.
- Protein prices are high worldwide
- Fibre prices are not really internationally driven but unfortunately local rain patterns this year have caused havoc with the processes of cutting and baling with the result that lucerne is already selling for the high prices normally only reached in mid winter. It is important to understand that one commodity like lucerne will have the supply and demand effect of driving most other fibre prices upwards as well.



How will this affect the price of my preferred Horse Feed?

The fact is that all high quality products will see price increases which will probably range from R5.00 to R15.00 per bag or between 7 - 12 %. Lower quality and budget ranges will also be affected but probably less so.

It is important to see the price rise in perspective and also against the backdrop of the actual decrease in prices which have been experienced for a while (see graph below).

This graph shows how **Train 'n Leisure** reduced in price by R11.00/40kg bag during the last six months and is still trading lower than September 2009.

What should I look out for when prices are rising?

Keep a good look out for consistency in the product. When raw material prices start rising, often the more "budget orientated" brands tend to play around with 'least cost' formulations using either less than desirable materials or too much of some in an attempt to dampen the cost effects. This often leaves the consumer in the dark about what is actually being purchased which is clearly not desirable and which will also certainly not pay in the long run.

How will this affect my feeding costs?

For a horse being fed 4 kg of **Equus Train 'n Leisure** per day the difference between the low in Sept 2010 and the present price (which is equal to the price 18 months ago) will be +/- R1-60 per day.

Equus Cool 'n Perform will also be affected in order to ensure quality is absolutely guaranteed. Although comparable in price to brands without added oils or yeast cultures, **Cool 'n Perform12** has become a benchmark for quality providing more omega -3 oils, quality protein and yeast culture than any product of its kind on the SA market.

The projected price by April 2011 (compared to 2010 prices) could work out to about a 10% increase in total (+/- R1-50 increase per horse fed 4kg per day). Most horses fed **Cool 'n Perform12**, however, are fed less than 4kg per day.

What can I do to minimize the effect of higher prices?

- 1) Use quality products correctly.
- 2) Speak to a feed consultant to ensure that no horses are being overfed and also about which horses in the yard can perhaps be downscaled to a lower energy and/or protein feed.
- 3) Make a concerted effort to buy the best quality hay available at reasonable prices – this saves hugely on concentrates!
- 4) Tighten up on rodent control – sometimes as much as 10% of hard feed can be lost to rodents not only by what they consume but also by what is lost due to damaged bags.
- 5) Keep in mind that what could potentially be lost due to bad management (rodents, wet bags, theft, incorrect application of the wrong product etc) could far outweigh the actual price increase – **double check on all these management issues!**
- 6) Keep in mind that feed costs are only part of the total costs running a yard and the cost of treating a bad colic could more than triple the cost of the increased feeding cost per month.
- 7) Choose a company which you know will reduce prices as soon as commodity prices allow price reductions again – this will ensure you don't have to subject your horse to the dangers of constantly swapping feeds (see **Equus Train 'n Leisure** graph below)

The following table shows the price movement of Equus's very popular **Train 'n Leisure** over the last 18 months.

September 2009	R 121,00 / 40kg
March 2010	R 114,00 / 40kg
September 2010	R 105,00 / 40kg
November 2010	R 110,00 / 40kg
March 2011	R 119,00 / 40kg
April 2011 (projected)	R 121,00 / 40kg

