



Shelves full of Supplements 1
Testimonial from Sarah Butler 2
Filling a Need? (Supplements) 2
– by Karen Briggs

facebook

Equus now on Facebook.

Visit Equus on Facebook for the latest news and keep us up to date with the achievements of all Equus fed horses

[CLICK HERE](#)

Exciting news is that Equus will now be distributed in Cape Town and surrounding areas by Serenity Equestrian Centre



Contact :

Mr. Peter Roodman

Tel : 021 975 6521

Mobile : 072 536 4540

E-mail address :

sales@serenityequestriancentre.co.za

Website :

www.serenityequestriancentre.co.za

Shelves full of Supplements Am I on the right track?

Equine supplements have become an enormous industry worldwide. Just a few years ago there were only half a dozen joint supplements on the market. Today there are well over 200 in the United States alone, with more squeezing onto the shelves every month.

Scores of supplements including those for joint health, respiratory health, anti-inflammatory and pain relief, antioxidants, calming, GI tract health, electrolytes, immune system health, energy boosters, hoof health, metabolic issues, muscle health, vitamins and minerals, senior supplements, skin and coat health and tendon and ligament health are available.

Although certain supplements do play an important role in bringing relief for horses suffering from certain conditions, it is important for horse owners to remember that oral supplements are, in large part, untested and their properties are often unproven. It is also virtually impossible for authorities to regulate the industry and the burden of evaluating and selecting the correct product lies unfortunately with the consumer. This means it is virtually essential to discuss these additions with a qualified nutritionist or veterinarian to ensure due diligence.



From inception, our philosophy at Equus Feeds has been to offer a small but sensible range of horse feeds which include all the important extras needed to fully satisfy the requirements of normal healthy horses.

These important extras include a healthy balance of omega-3 oils, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, electrolytes, a low sugar and high fibre composition as well as various ingredients which assist in contributing to calm behavior.

Our experience at bigger yards using Equus products is that the typical need for the supplementation of oils, additional vitamins and minerals and commonly used amino acid products disappears, which in turn leads to a significant subsequent cost saving. We also urge clients to be especially aware that over-supplementation can easily lead to imbalances creating problems far bigger than the initial one being addressed.

(continued on pg 2)

(Shelves full of Supplements – continued)

At Equus Feeds we do, however, recognize the need for, and importance of, specific supplements in cases not involving normal healthy horses and recognize the flexibility and focus that supplements provide when addressing very specific conditions.

The article by Karen Briggs below will hopefully assist in providing a comprehensive overview of supplementation while her 'Take Home Message' provides the essential caveats.

(See article on Supplements by Karen Briggs further down)

Testimonial from Sarah Butler

CONGRATULATIONS TO SARAH BUTLER ON HER SELECTION FOR THE INTER AFRICA CUP EQUITATION TEAM

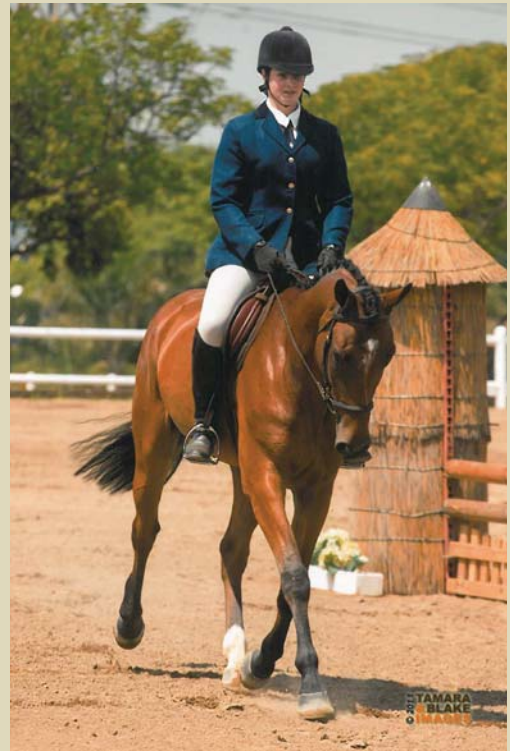
I started feeding my eventer Jester on Equus Cool 'n Perform 12 when I bought him in March 2010 and he did very well on it. In August 2010 he had a serious bout of biliary and lost a massive amount of condition so after treating him and resting him for 4 months, I followed the advice from Equus and began feeding him the Equus Cool 'n Perform 15 to help boost his condition and get him back on track.

After only a month back in work he looked amazing and felt great - even the showing judges at Horse of the Year thought so where he was placed second in the Working Hunter! I have kept him on this food with a slight downward adjustment and he is maintaining his condition beautifully without the need for any extras.

We are very busy with eventing, show jumping and equitation shows and throughout out all the disciplines I am always pleased with his good condition and calm disposition.

Thanks Equus

Sarah Butler



Picture: "Sarah on Jester at HOY".
Photo by Tamara Blake

Filling a Need? (Supplements)

by: [Karen Briggs](#)

Do your homework and consider your horse's entire nutritional picture before adding supplements.

When was the last time you stepped into a feed room that *didn't* contain a wide array of buckets, bottles, and tubs of supplements? There might have been a time when horses were fed on hay and oats alone, but these days we're much more likely to be feeding a balanced diet and adding a whole lot of "bells and whistles." Supplements have become more the rule than the exception.

Karen Briggs: Author Biography



Karen Briggs is the author of many books, including the recently updated *Understanding Equine Nutrition* as well as *Understanding The Pony*, both published by Eclipse Press. She's written a few thousand articles on subjects ranging from guttural pouch infections to how to compost your manure. She is also a Canadian certified riding coach, an equine nutritionist, and works in media relations for the harness racing industry. She lives with her band of off-the-track Thoroughbreds on a farm near Guelph, Ontario, and dabbles in eventing.

Part of the appeal is that supplements offer an unparalleled level of flexibility. Your horse might by necessity be fed the same grain ration as all of the other horse residents in his barn, but with supplements you can customize his diet for his individual needs. While your horse might benefit from a joint supplement to address his arthritis and minor aches and pains, his ribby neighbor might be putting on weight now that a supplement is helping calm his gastric ulcer. And the temperament of the mare across the aisle has mellowed thanks to a herbal preparation designed to address hormone swings.

With a formulation for virtually every problem a horse owner can think of--and more being introduced all the time--there's no question that supplements are here to stay.

A Study on Supplements

Does that mean, however, that you need to incorporate supplements into your feed program? Not necessarily. In fact, a recent survey of the riders of upper-level three-day eventers competing at the advanced three-star level indicates that some performance horses might be *significantly oversupplemented*.

Co-authors Amy Burk, PhD, of the University of Maryland, and Carey Williams, PhD, of Rutgers University in New Jersey, queried some riders entered in the 2006 and 2007 Jersey Fresh Three-Day Events about their horses' diets and found that "the majority of feeding management practices followed ... recommendations. However, the relatively high average supplement use per horse raises questions about oversupplementation and/or nutrient interactions in these horses," with each horse getting an average of four different oral products, such as electrolytes, plain salt, and oral joint health supplements.

Although this survey focused specifically on eventers, it's not hard to imagine other high-performance horses might also be getting too many supplements. There's a perception among many horse owners that because supplements are over-the-counter products, they have a wide margin of safety and there is no danger in piling them on. That's true for the most part, but just because supplements aren't classified as drugs doesn't mean there is no chance of adverse reactions between competing or incompatible products.

Like any other substance your horse ingests, supplements should be treated with respect and the awareness that they have the potential to do harm, as well as good.

The State of the Industry

SmartPak Equine LLC, a company which has found major success in packaging popular supplements in individual dose packs for easy top-dressing, is likely the world's largest distributor of different brands of equine supplements. It currently carries more than 350 equine supplements that are broken down into 28 categories, ranging from joint health, gastrointestinal tract support, and skin and coat "boosters," to products for the geriatric horse, the pregnant mare, and horses with specific metabolic problems such as insulin resistance.

SmartPak CEO Paal Gisholt notes, "When we began SmartPak in 2000, our original business plan included about 30 products for horses, which we figured would cover most people's needs. That sounds pretty naïf; ½ve now! "New categories are evolving all the time," he continues. "Tendon support is one example. There has been some research which suggests that adding silica to the diet may help contribute to better elasticity of tendons and ligaments in the performance horse. Elastic tendons and ligaments withstand stress and are less likely to tear. So supplements containing silica are starting to appear on the market to aid in extending a performance horse's athletic career, or helping him heal from a tendon or ligament injury he may already have sustained.

"Omega-3 fatty acid supplements are huge right now as well, though not necessarily for the right reasons," Gisholt adds. "People like it because it gives a superior bloom to the coat, but the best thing about omega-3s is they are anti-inflammatory and can help balance out high levels of omega-6 fatty acids (which are pro-inflammatory) in high-grain diets."

Joint supplements also continue to be big sellers. "Arthritis is a problem with horses in their athletic prime, as well as retirees," he says. "An increasing number of people also feed these products prophylactically to prevent future joint damage, though this is still an untested theory.

"When it comes to supplements, customers demonstrate strong brand loyalties," Gisholt says. "And we also find that different horses respond to different products. We have added to our catalogue based on what our customers are telling us." He says the company deals with manufacturers with commitments to safety, quality manufacturing standards, and good business ethics.

Oversupplementation might be an industry-wide problem, he says. "One of the things I see is people using some of these products indiscriminately, or too aggressively," cautions Gisholt. "If each of the supplements fed is for a different purpose, that's fine. For instance, I wouldn't consider a horse receiving a nutritional balance of hay and grain, plus a hoof supplement, a joint supplement, and an ulcer preventative, oversupplemented. But when people double up on products that are intended for the same purpose, that's another matter.

Certain nutrients compete for binding sites on cells, so too much of a good thing can be a bad thing."

Bill Bookout, president of the National Animal Supplement Council (NASC), an organization launched in 2002 as a way for responsible supplement manufacturers to self-regulate their industry, observes that, on the whole, the supplement industry is maturing. "It's becoming more responsible and more responsive to the consumer, while the consumer is becoming more informed and more discerning," he says.

NASC membership is voluntary, but, "We now represent 90% of the equine and companion animal supplements industry in the United States," Bookout says. "We first had to establish credibility for our organization, then we had to implement programs such as our audit of manufacturing practices and our NASC seal and, perhaps most importantly, our adverse events reporting system, which records and investigates every instance in which an animal has an alleged adverse reaction to a NASC-sanctioned product."

Bookout says in 2009 NASC is also implementing a mandatory random program of testing products to see whether they meet label claims for active ingredient content. Given that surveys of equine supplements have revealed that significant numbers of them contain less active ingredients than they claim, this is an important step in the animal-supplements industry.

"Now that we have these programs in place and have established our credibility with the regulatory agencies, we're entering the third phase, which is solutions," Bookout notes. "I wouldn't want to commit to a date, but the day is going to come when nutraceuticals find their own regulatory niche with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and with the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). We're getting closer to a regulatory solution."



Take-Home Message

Until the day when the government regulates equine supplements, it's important for horse owners to remember that oral supplements are, in large part, untested and unproven. It's important to talk to your veterinarian, do your own due diligence, and consider the horse's entire nutritional picture before you add a supplement to his diet. It's equally important to feed a supplement according to the product directions and for the length of time specified before you make up your mind as to its benefits or lack thereof.

Remember that products made with inferior ingredients, quality control, or labeling might not impart any benefit, and any perceived benefit from a supplement is anecdotal evidence (not necessarily something backed up by peer-reviewed studies).

The burden of confidence is definitely on the consumer when it comes to supplements, but if you select with care your horse might well reap the benefits.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

Supplements for horses can be divided into a variety of categories. *Remember there is little or no research to support the use of many herbal or supplemental ingredients for specific purposes in horses.* Here's a sampling of product types and what they might contain:

Joint health Generally these products contain glucosamine, chondroitin, hyaluronate, and/or methylsulfonylmethane (MSM), all purported to have chondroprotective (retarding degeneration of articular cartilage and promoting cartilage cell metabolism) properties.

Respiratory health These products are designed to help dilate bronchial passages and ease breathing for horses with allergies, small airway disease, or heaves. Garlic, ginger, elecampane, licorice root, and marshmallow (the herb) are some likely ingredients.

Anti-inflammatory and pain relief These supplements might contain herbal pain relief substitutes such as yucca, devil's claw, willow bark, or recent discoveries such as ASU (avocado and soybean unsaponifiables), which research has shown reduces the severity of cartilage breakdown and joint membrane bleeding.

Antioxidant Ingredients such as vitamin C, vitamin E, selenium, and grape seed extract might help protect cells from free radical damage.

Calming Supplements containing valerian, chamomile, vitamin B1, L-tryptophan, and/or magnesium are used. For the hormonal swings of mares, they might contain herbs such as raspberry leaf or black cohosh.

GI tract health These are designed to ease clinical signs of gastric and/or intestinal ulcers (papaya is one popular ingredient). Prebiotics are said to aid beneficial bacteria populations in the gut, and probiotics are live cultures designed to bolster the existing populations of beneficial gut bugs. (See page 43 for more information on prebiotics/probiotics.)

Electrolytes These are designed to help replace micro-minerals lost in sweat, usually sodium, chloride, potassium, calcium, and magnesium.

Immune system health These are intended to support healthy immune system function and might contain antioxidants and/or herbal preparations such as garlic and echinacea.

Energy boosters Crafted to support the efforts of performance horses, these might contain iron, vitamin B12, DMG (dimethylglycine), which could enhance muscle metabolism, and HMB (beta-hydroxy beta- methylbutyrate), which might increase lean muscle mass.

Hoof growth and health These contain ingredients such as biotin (a B vitamin), methionine, and zinc to help grow stronger hoof horn.

Insect control Feed-through fly control products might contain organophosphates or insect growth regulator compounds that inhibit the formation of chitin (which makes up the hard outer covering in adult insects). Both pass through the horse and do their work in the manure pile.

Metabolic issues Designed to address insulin resistance, chronic laminitis, and equine Cushing's syndrome, these products might contain magnesium, chromium, ginseng, banana leaf, and cinnamon.

Muscle health These contain ingredients such as creatine, DMG, and gamma oryzanol (a substance found in rice bran that might help build muscle mass) and are designed to assist in muscle development.

Vitamins and minerals Some of these supplements are broad-spectrum; others are targeted to address specific concerns and contain only specific vitamins or minerals.

Senior supplements These products might address arthritic joints, decreased digestive efficiency, and tissue damage, with a variety of ingredients ranging from MSM to antioxidants to prebiotics and probiotics.

Skin and coat Products with a high fat content contribute to supple skin and a glossy hair coat. Flaxseed and other sources of omega-3 fatty acids are particularly popular. Some products might contain ingredients such as paprika to help enhance certain coat colors.

Tendon and ligament health Silica is a possible aid in keeping tendons and ligaments elastic and resilient.