



BLENDING NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY

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newsletter

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ASK EQUUS

Question: "My Horse has COPD - is there anything I can feed her that will help?"

Answer:

Before looking at a feeding program, it is important to understand the cause of COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). While there is some debate about the primary cause, it is the general consensus that COPD is caused by an exposure to dust, moulds, and other air pollutants.

The reason for debate about primary cause is the puzzling fact that two horses might share the same environment and feed, while one suffers from COPD and the other shows no signs. Does this mean that heredity is involved and that some horses are predisposed to COPD and others are not? Additional long-term research will be necessary before those questions are answered with certainty.

"What is known is that dust and mould, particularly, can bring on an episode of COPD. However, it is also known that unless the environment and/or feeding program are changed, the condition can become permanent and compromise the horse's ability to perform" (Reference The Horse.com)

So can feed really help?

The answer to this is, in some part, yes. However, other management changes will also go a long way to helping a horse with COPD. 24 hour turnout at pasture is often recommended as it helps to eliminate potential allergens such as dust and mould from bedding, stable floors and surrounds while limiting the amount of hay that may need to be fed. However, if this is not possible, examining dust free/low dust bedding options such as newspaper and stabling the horse in a well ventilated area away from other horses, is the next best option.

Can I still feed hay?

Horses are designed to eat roughage and this should be the main ingredient in any horse's diet. For a healthy digestive tract function, it has been estimated that a horse must consume on a daily basis 1.5% of its body weight in long-stem dry matter. Hay also serves to promote natural behaviours in a stalled environment where wood chewing and weaving problems, to mention only two, could become a problem if the horse is fed a non-hay diet.

In many cases, turning a stabled horse out on green grass will enable the reduction of hay altogether as their roughage needs will be met from 24 hr grazing. However, if this is not possible or the grazing is of poor quality you will still need to provide hay as a roughage source.

Testimonials

Dear Equus

Hi Equus

I have used your products with fantastic results for the past few years but this year I thought I would try my horse Centennial on the **Safe n Life** prior to the KZN Dressage Champs, and am excited to say I had my Champion back. It has made such a difference to his temperament and he is more focused and trainable.

He had a 1st 2 2nds a 3rd and won the KZN Breeders Award for the Top Thoroughbred.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me with his feed.

Much love,
Heather Cochrane

Before



After



There are several changes that can be made to make roughage more suitable:

- Feeding hay on the ground can help to lessen the inhalation problem, but does not eliminate it.
- Avoid large round bales which often develop mould during storage. If the round bales are placed on the ground, there usually is enough moisture on the bottom part of the bale to stimulate the development of mould. If round bales are the only option, they should either be stored on a dry floor under a roof or should be wrapped with a protected covering.
- Check your hay for mould regularly and rather buy often to ensure freshness instead of storing large amounts.
- Soak your hay before feeding. The hay should be completely immersed in water (for around 60mins in cold water) so that any mould is washed off and dust is reduced. Always discard water after soaking.

For horses with extreme cases of COPD, or for those where simple management changes do not make a vast difference, however, you may need to look to other alternatives of providing extra roughage. This can be in the form of pelleted high fibre feeds, such as **Equus Nice 'n Easy**, chaffs and Sugar beet products.

It is also wise to look to a pelleted concentrate feed for those needing more than grazing and hay alone. This helps further to eliminate dust and fine particles.

COPD is definitely a case where prevention is key. Keeping the horses in a clean environment and feeding only green, dust and mould free hay, together with a pelleted concentrate feed, can help prevent the disease from occurring.

Horses without molars have difficulty grinding their feed, so in these cases it is best to avoid ingredients with hard outer coats such as whole maize, sunflower seeds or ingredients that need to be reduced in size before swallowing (such as long stem grass or hay). This is a problem as large clumps of hay or grass (boluses) could become stuck in the oesophagus, causing choke. Where a horse is missing molars, then you will need to take some of the work out of chewing for him.

Dietary Omega-3 Fatty Acids Improve Airway Function in Horses

By Kentucky Equine Research Staff – July 1, 2015

Horses that are sensitive to the fine airborne particles from hay, dust and mold spores may develop chronic inflammatory airway disease if they are exposed to high concentrations of these contaminants. According to equine nutritionist Kathleen Crandell Ph.D. of Kentucky Equine Research (KER) the most successful treatment for airway inflammation is to turn horses out to pasture. If turnout is not possible

or practical then various management measures must be taken to reduce the level of dust exposure. These steps include using low-dust bedding, such as newspaper, dampening or soaking hay before feeding, and providing excellent ventilation throughout the stable yard.

Recent research has also discovered that Omega 3 fatty acid supplementation may also be beneficial. In a study conducted at Purdue University College of Veterinary Medicine, 43 horses were fed a complete pelleted diet (no long stemmed forage) with 30-60ml of Omega 3 oils. Although improvement was seen in all horses, the biggest was in those supplemented with Omega 3 fatty acids. They showed a 60% improvement in cough scores, and a 48% decrease in respiratory effort.

Overall improvement could be expected because hay was replaced with a complete pelleted diet. However increased improvement in the horses supplemented with omega-3 fatty acids, could be attributed to the ability of these acids to modulate inflammatory responses within cells.

Karen Keller

Schooling Success



Karen is a Protea Dressage rider and National Champion, who is highly regarded in her field. When Karen is not schooling her own horses, she spends a lot of time teaching up and coming riders at Kellandstables, as well as at their home yards.

In this new series, Karen will be sharing her schooling "top tips" to help you and your horse in your everyday riding.

How to tell if your horse is 'On The Aids'

1. Your horse must be completely relaxed as tension creates resistance. If there is resistance, the rider may end up using force, with the aids becoming stronger and exaggerated, with no finesse.
2. The horse must listen to the rider's legs, moving either forward or sideways from them. A horse will naturally move into pressure and has to be trained to move away from pressure.
3. The horse must follow the weight of the rider. Again, the horse must be relaxed and accepting of the rider on his back without fear and without tight, tense muscles. It is often useful for the rider to imagine having a marshmallow under each foot and then to squash the left marshmallow to turn left and the right one to turn right. This gives some idea of how lightly one should be giving the aid.
4. The back and seat of the rider must be the greatest influence on the horse when indicating whether longer or shorter strides are required and when to go forward more actively or to stop. I think it is ideal if the seat takes 80% of the responsibility for the aids.
5. When it comes to rein aids, the horse has to accept a 'friendly' contact on the corners of the mouth, neither pulling nor dropping the contact, but mentally and physically connecting to the rider's touch. The horse has to understand to follow the contact and stretch forwards, downwards, relinquish it or flex to the left and right. The ideal contact is the weight of the reins but there are some degrees of differences from horse to horse. I use the analogy of a parent holding a child's hand to help them cross a busy road, controlling but gentle, always giving confidence without any fear.

Happy Riding

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For an absolutely free consultation with no further obligation contact our professional consultants to schedule a visit to your yard.

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