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The EQUINE PRACTICE ROUNDS

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IS GRAIN KILLING YOUR HORSE?

For the last 50 years, grain has been touted as a necessary part of equine nutrition.

It is used for adding weight, maintaining weight, dosing supplements, and even in place of regular feed. The problem is that horses are not designed to be able to process the sugars and corn in most grains. Instead of breaking down the usable nutrients, their gut rejects the foreign substance in the same way that your finger swells and festers around a splinter.



This inflammatory response takes a lot of energy, usually more than the horse would have gained from the extra calories available in the grain. This is partially why a grained horse may still struggle to gain weight. This is also why many horses on grain tend to pick up bad behaviors. These are the horses that refuse to trailer or work, get cranky when brushed, touched, or saddled, and those who have watery or abnormal manure balls. The No. 1 cause of these issues is the sugar content in grain and beet pulp (which, by the way, is short for sugar beet pulp). These sugars cause inflammation and discomfort all along the horse's digestive system and disrupt their natural digestion.

I believe that grain is an evil substance for the health of horses, and I encourage all of my clients and readers to try my two-week, no-grain challenge to see a huge improvement in the

health and behavior of your horse. Now is the perfect time to start, before winter hits, so all you have to do is grab a calendar and circle a date two weeks from today. Then hang that in the barn and remember not to give your horse any grain, sugar cubes, apples, treats, or even carrots before that date. For the course of this challenge, the only things your horse should have access to are hay, grass, alfalfa, water, and pure salt. Be sure to avoid

red salt blocks, which are made with corn sugar, and table salt because it contains anti-caking agents.

The next step is to document the change in your horse over the course of the challenge. Be sure to record their behavior, temperament, and even their health issues before and after. The evidence is mounting that grain is extremely harmful to horses. Once you've completed your two-week challenge, please send your diary entries to geoff@theequinepractice.com so that your story can help educate others. Best of all, this challenge is completely free, and if it doesn't work, you can always resume your old grain habits. Just remember, there are other options besides grain. Stay tuned for my two-week challenge page and more details on alternative feeds!

Doc T

LAMINITIS

Laminitis is inflammation of the tissue that holds the hoof wall to the horse's leg, specifically the coffin bone, P3, or the distal phalange. This tissue is called the lamina. If this doesn't make sense to you, then think of the fingernail attached to the middle finger of your hand. This is attached similarly to the way the hoof is attached to the leg. To experience laminitis, lay your middle finger on a hard surface, nail facing up, and strike it with a hammer. Now try to walk on that finger. That is how painful laminitis can be to a horse.

There are a few essential things you need to know about this painful disease of the hooves of horses. Let's look at each of them separately.

- 1) Laminitis is an event. Like the hammer striking your fingernail, an insult occurs in the horse that damages the connection between the hoof and the underlying bone. Once it has occurred, the damaged lamina cannot return to normal. That would be like un-frying an egg and putting it back into an egg shell. The damage is done, and all we can try to do is prevent further inflammation from what caused the event in the first place.
- 2) Laminitis has degrees, just like a dimmer switch on a light bulb can take the light from full off to full on with an infinite number of spots in between. Couple this with the infinite degrees of the horse's sensitivity to pain, and you have a different laminitis event for every horse on the planet. Some horses can have severe laminitis and not show much, while others can't walk with their first minor bout. However, for a majority of horses, it is very painful.
- 3) Gravity is not your friend with this disease. What happens after the laminitis event can make or break the result. As the weight of the horse comes down on the hoof, the amount of destruction of the attachment between the bone and hoof will determine if the bone stays in place and holds the weight, or if it rotates away from the hoof under the strain. This rotation is permanent and cannot return to normal. I joke when I say that the best treatment for a horse with laminitis is to put him into space where there is no gravity. If we could, then we could heal the inflammation without any rotation, and then return the horse to our world of weight and all would be okay.
- 4) Research has clearly shown that almost every horse with laminitis is insulin resistant (IR). In a nutshell, the sugar molecule absorbed from food is carried to the cell by a molecule of insulin. At the cell wall, insulin knocks on the cell's door and announces that they have a delivery of sugar for the cell, just like the delivery guy knocks at your door with a package. Normally, a molecule within the cell called the "glucose transport molecule" (GTM) comes from within the cell and accepts the sugar molecule, transports it across the cell wall, and takes it to where it is needed within the cell. The empty insulin gets back in his truck and drives back to the warehouse to get loaded for another delivery.

In IR, the GTM refuses the package. It has become tired of going to the door to accept another package the cell doesn't really need. The GTM resists the call out from insulin, hence the name "insulin resistance." It says no more and sends the delivery truck away with

the sugar molecule still attached. While horses and humans need some sugar to operate our bodies, it is basically inflammatory to all of our tissues. No, I can't explain why sugar tastes so good and why we crave it, but many good scientific studies have proven that sugar is inflammatory to our bodies. In the horse, it is the lamina that seems to be more susceptible to this inflammation than any other part of their body.

You can test your horse to see if he is IR, or you can just go to the next step and restrict access to any extra sugar. This includes all grains, sugar beets, carrots, apples, treats and supplements with grain, and sugar cubes. ALL OF IT. And forget using "low carb" feeds. Half a Twinkie is still half a Twinkie. Feeding half of a regular grain is the same as feeding a "low carb" grain. But even this is misleading.

It is not HOW much sugar you feed your horse, it is if you feed ANY sugar to a horse that has a severe inflammatory reaction to the sugar molecules. Just like a person intolerant of wheat gluten, some horses are just that sensitive to sugars. The only safe feed to give these horses is NO FEED.

- 5) If you need to feed a treat, use a hay cube or a whole peanut, including the shell.
- 6) Treatment for laminitis needs to be immediate and includes, in order of importance: ICE therapy, cold water, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication (phenylbutazone, aka "bute"). It has been proven that placing a horse's front hooves (or all four) in an ice bath up to his knees before getting laminitis prevents the event from occurring (the study horses were placed in ice and given a grain overload). They can remain in the bath for a week, with no adverse effects to the horse in any way. In severe cases of laminitis, horses will prefer standing in the ice water to any place else. They will stay there without laying down for as long as you have them in there. Ice will stop inflammation in its tracks.

Well, I am out of space. I hope these points help explain laminitis for you. I will have a webcast on this subject soon. Please check the schedule for the date. All webcasts are FREE and are on the first Sunday of the month at 7 p.m. Eastern United States time.



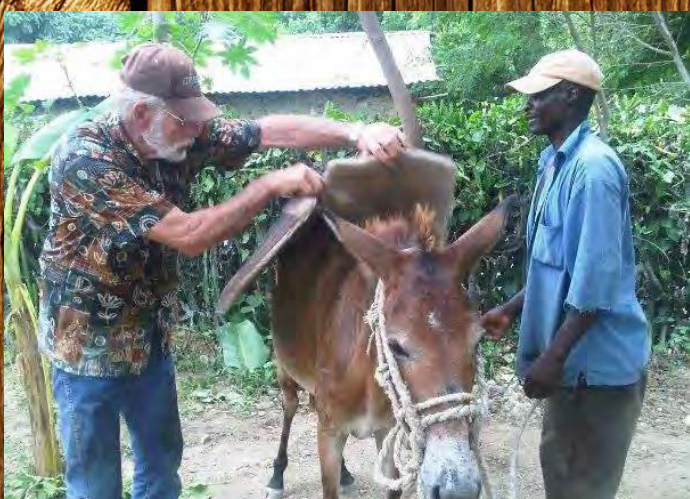


Human Interest FB Post

There are 100 million horses, asses, and mules in the world. About 10 million of them are in the United States. The majority of the remainder carry people, grain, bricks, rocks, and anything else that fits on their backs. Many of these animals have no shelter from the weather, inadequate feed and water, and often absent veterinary and basic husbandry care.

This post came to us via Facebook, and struck a chord with the team here at The Equine Practice, Inc. We thought you should know about it. I photographed Kathy boxing up our used pads for shipment. Please consider doing the same, then post a picture of you doing this on your own FB page and spread the word. There are a lot of people waiting for our help.

Doc T



Hey Everyone,

I am a veterinarian of over 50 years, and have been part of a program the last several years to collect saddle pads to be donated to the horses of Haiti. They only have bamboo available to use as saddle pads, and as you can see it is detrimental to the horse's back/spine. I have been here several times (that is me in the top picture, showing him how to place the pads on the horse's back) and have donated my vet services and treated all the horses, cows, and goats I could while I was there with some other vets.

If you have any saddle pads you can donate, please email me at docandlugordon@gmail.com.

Since I am not very wise about Facebook, my good friend Jennifer Rose is helping me with Facebook communications. Please be patient with me, as Facebook is new and overwhelming for me. If not for Jennifer helping me here, I would be lost. Thanks for understanding.

If you do need to ship via mail to get them to me, please send to:

Rays of Hope for Haiti
446 Grandville Ave S.W.
Dock #6
Grand Rapids MI 49503

The pads are put in a container with other things going to Haiti. I weigh the pads, and when I get 50 pounds of weight, I tie the pads together with twine from my hay bales. The pads are then placed in plastic garbage bags (42-pound size). They are again tied up like a package with hay bale twine, and shipped this way to Michigan. The trucking company may ask for measurements. Mine are 3-feet by 3-feet and 12-inches high.

Please share with your friends so we can collect donations. Thank you!

A Horse, or Just a Number

I was saddened to say goodbye to this horse today. Don't get me wrong when I say he's a very difficult horse to float. He is a pain in my backside. "Wimp" is one way to describe him. He allows me to do certain things, while others are a flat out "NO!" It's not pain related. He does it just because he can.

Most professionals would say "Good riddance, I'm glad you are moving to Idaho." Literally in a week, this Florida gelding will be in the cold Northwest of the United States, 2000 miles away.

So why will I miss him? Because he is a survivor. Not just him, but the owner as well, who, with her dedication to him, nursed him through his time of trouble. About two years ago, he was out in the field, minding his own business, eating grass. In a heartbeat, his life and the life of his owner changed. A water moccasin bit him on his mouth.

The image in my mind is momentarily comical. A horse moving backward as fast as possible, eyes all but out of their sockets, hind hooves out in front of forelimbs, dirt flying about, tail head touching the ground, lower lip stretched out a half foot, and a large venomous snake attached to the lip.

You can credit the work of the vet, Western medicine, and even the Eastern medicines used to treat the snake bite, but I give the credit to three things: the horse's will to survive; the owner's willingness to do what most would not do, by giving hourly nursing care; and the connection between the horse and its human companion.

I smiled and thought of sedating the beast. But then he lowered his head, gently touched his nose to my arm, and thanked me for removing another sharp point digging into his tongue. All was good when I left the stall.

As a professional working with horses, it is tempting to look at our patients as statistics. Today I was again reminded, as I was flung



through the air, that this is a living, breathing creature. It is the connection we make with horses that keeps us in the profession and provides us the juice to devote ourselves to it daily.

Melissa and I get to experience this connection every day and witness horses evolve in their cooperation with us as we smooth their teeth. One of the things we see the most is their gratefulness when we remove their source of oral pain. Just like you, the horse starts to trust those who help eliminate their pain. This is why we recommend floating every six months, because for most horses, after six months is when they experience more pain as the teeth continue to sharpen and rub against the soft tissues in their mouths.

Prevention is better than correction! Find out why an appointment every six months is so important. Visit www.horsemanshipdentistry.com/straight-from-the-horses-mouth/ or call 888- HORZVET (467-9838) to schedule your next appointment.

Upcoming Events — Horse Talk

Free webinar first Sunday of the month.

Go to www.thehorsesadvocate.com/horsetalk to reserve your place.

10/4/2015 Parasites

1/3/2016 Horsemanship

4/3/2016 Navicular

11/1/2015 Laminitis

2/7/2016 Foaling Problems

5/1/2016 Barn Safety

12/6/2015 Nutrition Basics

3/6/2016 Breeding Basic

6/5/2016 EPM & Lyme

7/3/2016 More Horsemanship