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## Equine Feed Supplements

**Balanced Diet** – A diet that contains all the Vitamins and Minerals the horse needs in the *proper amounts* and *in the proper ratio*. Most feeds marketed towards horses now days are balanced feeds when fed in the appropriate amounts.

**Feed Supplement** – A component we add to an imbalanced diet to ensure the horse gets the proper amount and ratio of vitamins and minerals, *or* a component we add to the feed to support another system (joint health, hoof growth, etc.)

**Vitamin and Mineral Supplements** – Can be used to balance a horse’s feed. These supplements can be beneficial for horses that receive a pasture based diet, or for horses with low energy requirements that can’t get their requirements from grain. Most formulas targeted towards horses will work well but beware of some generic brands copying formulas for livestock and horses.

Things to Consider:

- Equine Specific Formula
- Palatability (either taste or form such as pellets, powder, or flakes)
- Beware of overlapping ingredients between supplements to avoid toxicities or needless supplementation

**Electrolytes** – used to replace electrolytes lost during sweating or activity or to encourage thirst both physiologically and by adding a familiar taste to the water. Most brands are about equivalent to the other, there’s not much of a difference between brands given to livestock or those that are equine specific that both serve the same purpose.

Things to consider:

- Form (powder – usually for daily use to be placed in water - or paste – usually for one time use to replenish losses)
- Always keep a bucket of electrolyte free water if you’re offering in a water bucket
- NEVER give to an HYPP NH+ (the “Impressive” gene)
- I prefer not to give prior to athletic events, okay to give afterwards to replenish the electrolytes lost while sweating

**Joint Supplements:** Given to support joint health. Used in athletic horses to relieve and prevent arthritis or older arthritic horses to relieve symptoms. It takes about a month to see an improvement or effect after placing a horse on joint supplement. Ingredients are typically similar, beware some brands don’t contain what their label claims.

Ingredients to Look for:

- Chondroitin Sulfate – 1,400mg Daily
- Glucosamine – 14,400mg Daily
- Methylsulfonamine (MSM) – 10,000mg Daily
- +/- Hyaluronic Acid
- +/- Avacado Oil
- +/- Yucca

Brand I Recommend: Cosequin

**Hoof Supplements** – Use to improve the quality of hoof growth. A horse’s foot takes about a year to grow out completely and feed supplements won’t improve the hoof that already exists, so in order to see the full benefits a horse has to be on hoof supplement continuously for at least a year. This is another nutraceutical, like joint supplements, so not all brands contain what they claim on the label, so buyer beware.

Ingredients to Look for:

- Biotin (15-30mg/day)
- +/- Vitamin E/Selenium (Careful not to overlap with other supplements)

Brands I recommend: Horseshoer’s Secret, Farrier’s Formula

**Probiotics** – The intestine has a natural flora of bacteria, imbalances occur when certain pathogenic bacteria overwhelm the normal flora. Evidence this is helpful for gastrointestinal health in other single stomach animals such as humans and dogs, theirs is some question as to whether the bacteria reach a horse’s all important, large intestine. I often recommend to horses that get soft stool from the grass in the spring and fall or horses on antibiotic therapy.

What to Look for:

- Saccromyces
- Enteromyces
- Lactobacillus

\*Probiotics also come in pastes, flakes, and gel capsules – so keep in mind what your horse will eat!\*

Brands I Recommend: Probios, Mitohorse

**Gastric Ulcer Prevention** – This is a veterinary problem, so at least consult with your veterinarian before attempting to treat this yourself! Once you have a diagnosis, prevention is the key: changes in management are most effective –

- Increase pasture turn-out
- Decrease the amounts of sugars and carbs in your horse’s diet, Increase the amount of fat (so switch from a sweet feed to pelleted feed such as Purina Strategy)
- Switch to Alfalfa Hay

Drugs and Supplements:

- Omeprazole (Gastrogard and Ulcergard)
  - [www.gastrogard.com](http://www.gastrogard.com)
  - [www.ulcergard.com](http://www.ulcergard.com)
- Ranitidine (Zantac)

- Alfalfa based feed supplements? (May have an effect if used daily, I'm not sure if they are in concentrated enough amounts to get the buffering effect alfalfa hay has)

**Blood Builders** – Blood Builders typically provide the building blocks bone marrow uses to make red blood cells. They probably don't directly stimulate red blood cell production, but if there is a deficiency in these components the body won't be able to build red blood cells. Most horses do get these components from their diet in appropriate amounts. Thin horses or those that have evidence of mal-nutrition: so a recent rescue case, horses that have had parasite or dentition problems, etc. may have a chronic depletion of the components necessary to make red blood cells. To build these components up I often recommend starting on a supplement such as Red Cell. A lot of people give this as a performance enhancer, I personally don't put much faith in that, but it won't hurt anything either.

Things to look for:

- Iron
- Vitamin B
- Amino Acids (protein)

**Muscle/Weight Builders** – The idea behind these supplements is to provide nutrition for increasing weight or building muscle. Older horses, thin horses, or those that have had mal-nutrition in the past can benefit from these supplements. Glutamine – an amino acid - has some evidence in humans and is promoted for building muscle; there is no evidence in horses.

Ingredients I recommend:

- Rice Bran
- Linseed Oil
- Glutamine – amino acid (not by itself but as a part of a complete supplement)

*\*Please Keep in mind, the brand names I'm recommending are just the ones I'm familiar with and am comfortable in saying they do a decent job. Some off brand and generics do just as good of a job, there are so many on the market I can't keep up with them in telling which ones have what they say they have or even have an effect at all. Just because I say there's no evidence, doesn't mean product doesn't work, it just means someone hasn't done a good quality, peer reviewed study into its effects and claims. \**

This website is pretty cool, they pull products off the shelves and chemically test them to see if they contain what the label says they contain.

<http://Consumerlab.com>

Some relevant Articles from Thehorse.com

Biotin and Hoof Supplements -

<http://www.thehorse.com/articles/16881/biotin-does-it-work>

Joint Supplementation

<http://www.thehorse.com/videos/32164/do-joint-supplements-help-prevent-and-or-treat-arthritis>

American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP): [aaep.org](http://aaep.org)

Missouri Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA): [www.movma.org](http://www.movma.org)