

CARE & FEEDING of your SENIOR HORSE

It hasn't been that long ago that a horse was considered a senior at age 14 to 17. Now they are living and performing well into their 20's and many of them into their 30's.

I attribute that to three main things:

1. Much lighter work loads and usage.
2. Better care and nutrition
3. Better genetics.

Those are the positives of the longevity on our horses. The down side is we are now dealing with old-age problems such as cushings, EMS, joint and bone problems, laminitis, and cancer just to name a few.

Let's begin with, what I call, general health/vet care and maintenance of your senior horse. These four basic points, in my opinion, are crucial for their over all wellness.

1. Quarterly deworming program. (Cross Reference Sheet) Many problems will surface in a horse in its later years if this protocol has been neglected. Most of them will be digestive problems.
2. A regular vaccination program. You should consult your vet on what is appropriate for your horses needs. (Cross Reference Sheet)
3. Regular farrier work and trimmings. Good hoof maintenance is a must to keep your horse sound. No matter what its job in life is, if you don't have good sound feet on a horse you don't really have a useful animal. Think how limited you would be if your feet hurt or bothered you all the time.
4. Dental care is very important to a senior horse. A good common sense approach is to have your vet examine and float your horse's teeth. A vet will know not to float the teeth too aggressively in an older horse. Poor teeth in a horse can lead to several problems such as improper chewing, inability to graze; sores in the mouth will cause loss of appetite, and choking. Dental exams twice a year are appropriate for the senior horse.

Now we can move on to the nutrition side of the care and maintenance of the senior horse. I am going to assume that your horse's environment is ideal. The horse should have unlimited access to fresh clean water source at all times. Horses prefer water temps to be 45 to 75 degrees. That it's corral, run, or pasture supplies it with adequate cover in adverse weather conditions and allows plenty of room to move about naturally to encourage normal exercise. If your senior horse is in a group of horses make sure it is not so low on the pecking order that it is being chased or kept away from its feed and water source.

Care and Feeding of your Senior Horse

Page #2

Roughage is a vital part of the equine diet. Without proper amounts, problems can occur in the digestive tract. Good quality grass/alfalfa mixed hay is ideal. I prefer a 75/25 mix. Hay needs to be dust and mold free. If good quality hay is not available or your horse can not chew long stem hay, well, a person can look into hay cubes for a roughage source.

Now let's discuss the grains available to your senior horse. There are many good senior feeds on the market. You need to choose a palatable, highly digestible feed balanced and formulated for the senior horse. It can be pelleted or textured, with a level of protein ranging from 12 – 16 percent depending on your horse's needs. The extrusion process in the pelleted feeds makes the grains easily digested. The textured feeds have the grains that are steam rolled or flaked that make them highly digestible. Most senior feeds on the market have some type of forage included; such as alfalfa meal, soy hulls, beet pulp, or a combination of these ingredients. You can choose what type of feed your horse eats and likes the best. Since horses are by nature grazers, feeding smaller meals more frequently are ideal, especially for the senior horse. Your horse's digestive system is not designed to consume large amounts of feed in one or two feedings. The senior feeds have the correct formulations to meet the vitamin and mineral levels needed. The fat content at 4 to 6 percent is also adequate to maintain a good flesh condition on your horse.

Take some time to study the body scoring chart. You can then rate the flesh condition of your horse. The feeding instructions are usually clear and simple to understand. If your horse has no health or weight issues they will work well to maintain good flesh cover. If you are having problems with your horse either being too thin or too fat, you need to consult with the professionals. Never hesitate to call your vet to do a health check on your horse. Your vet can run blood tests and check levels to cover every base, so there is no doubt about what is going on. You can also consult with a horse nutritionist. A feed expert can help you find any hidden nutritional voids that may be in your hay or grains. Your job as a horse owner is to take a step back and really evaluate the condition of your horse, every week! Is it acting perky? Are its ears up most of the time? Are the eyes clear and shiny? Is it attentive? Does the hair look healthy? If you can't honestly see flesh or weight changes in your horse because you see it everyday, then take a picture of it every two weeks and compare them. You can also have another horse owner come over and look at your horse every so often to see if they notice any changes.

In conclusion, make use of the charts and info available to you. Don't hesitate to get on the internet and utilize some of the better equine websites.

Last of all; remember to use a common sense approach when feeding your horse. They really aren't much different than you and I in their nutritional needs!

Thank you for your time!!

Equine Worming Chart

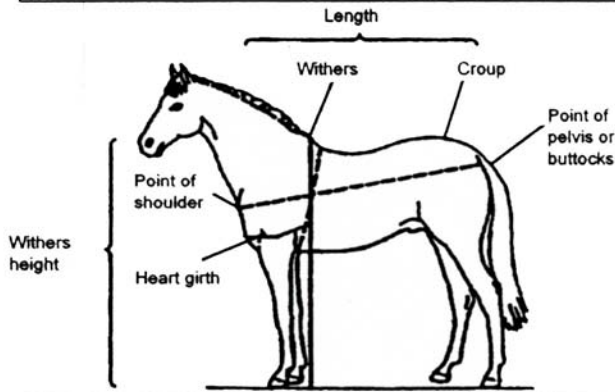
Eq Wormers	Brand Name	Presentation	Lg Strngl	Sm Strngl	Pinworms	Rndworm	Hairworms	Bots	Tape
Ivermectin			X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Equell	Paste							
	Iver-care	Paste							
	Zimectrin	Paste							
	Equimectrin	Paste							
	Rotation I	Paste							
	Ivermectin	Paste							
	Eqvalan RX	Liq							
	Eqvalan RX	Paste							
	Dvmectrin RX	Liq							
	Zimectrin Gold	Paste							X
Equimax	Paste							X	
Fenbendazole			X	X	X	X			
	Safeguard	Paste & gran							
	Panacur	Paste & gran							
	Panacur RX	Susp							
Pyrantal Tartrate			X	X	X	X			
	Strongid C	Pellets							
	Strongid C2X	Pellets							
	Equi-Aid Cont Wm	Pellets							
	Equi-Aid Strongyle	Pellets							
	Rotation II	Paste							
	Alfalfa pellet Wm	Pellets							
	Continuex	Pellets							
	Wonder Wormer	Pellets							
Pyrantel Pamoate			X	X	X	X			
	Strongid T RX	Susp							
	Pro Pam	Susp							
	Strongid	Paste							
	Exodus	Paste							
	Liqui-Care P	Susp							
Oxibendazole			X	X	X	X			
	Anthelcide Eq	Paste							
	Benzelmin	Paste							
Moxidectin			X	X	X	X	X		
	Quest	Paste							
	Quest Plus^	Paste							X
Moxidectin/praziquantel			X	X	X	X	X		X
	ComboCare	Paste							

EQUINE VACCINE COMPARISON

WEST NILE VIRUS	EPM	RHINO(EHV-4/EHV-1)	RHINO(EHV-1B/1P)	FLU	EASTERN/WESTERN ENCEPH	VENEZUELAN ENCEPH	TETANUS TOXOID	TETANUS ANTITOXIN	POTOMAC HORSE FEVER	STREPTOCOCCUS EQUI	RABIES	ARTERITIS	ROTAVIRUS	FORT DODGE	INTERVET	BIVI	MERIAL	PFIZER
X														WEST NILE -INNOVATOR			WEST NILE - RECOMBITK	
X					X	X								WEST NILE-INNOV +EWT				
X					X	X	X							WEST NILE-INNOV +VEWT				
X					X									WEST NILE-INNOV + EW				
X					X	X								WEST NILE-INNOV +VEW				
	X	X												FLUVAC INNOV EHV 4/1	PRESTIGE II	CALVENZA EIV/EHV		RHINOFLU
				X										FLUVAC INNOVATOR	EQUICINE II /FLUAVERT IN	CALVENZA EIV		
				X	X	X								FLUVAC INNOV 4	ENCEVAC TC-4	EQUI-FLU EWT	EQUINE EWTF	TETMUNE EW
	X	X	X	X	X									FLUVAC INNOV 5				
	X	X	X	X	X	X								FLUVAC INNOV 6				
				X	X	X	X							FLUVAC INNOV TRPL-EFT	ENCEVAC TC-4 VEE	EQUI-FLU VEWT		
				X	X									EQUILOID INNOVATOR	ENCEVAC T	CEPHALOVAC EWT		
				X	X	X								TRIPLE-ET INNOV	ENCEVAC T + VEE	CEPHALOVAC VEWT		
	X			X	X	X								TRIPLE-ET + EHV				
				X	X									TRIPLE-E				
	X			X	X									DOUBLE-ET + EHV				
									X					PINNACLE IN	STREPGUARD	STREPVAX II		
					X	X		X						POTOMAC GUARD EWT				
								X						POTOMAC GUARD	MYSTIQUE	EQUOVUM PHF	EQ POTOMACVAC	PHF-GARD
								X	X						MYSTIQUE II	EQUOVUM PHF + RABIES	EQ POTOMVC + IMRAB	
				X										ENCEPHALOID IM				
	X													EQUIVAC EHV 1/4	PRESTIGE	CALVENZA EHV		RHINOMUNE
								X						TETANUS ANTITOXIN				
							X							TETANUS TOXOID	SUPER-TET	TETGUARD		
		X												PNEUMABORT K + 1B				
										X				RABVAC 3 / 3TF				IMRAB 3 / IMRAB BOV +
											X			ARVAC				
												X		ROTAVIRUS				
X														S.NEURONA VACCINE				

Equine Body Scoring Chart

Determining what a horse weighs is the foundation of a logical feeding and management program. In addition to helping calculate daily intake requirements for hay and grain, accurate assessment of each horse's weight is necessary for the proper dosage of dewormers and other medication!



Estimating a Horse's Body Weight

$(\text{Heart girth} \times \text{Length}) / 330 = \text{Weight in lbs}$

*Measure in inches the heart girth just behind the withers and elbows.

*Measure in inches from point of shoulder to point of buttocks.

BODY CONDITION SCORING GUIDELINES

Horses should be maintained at condition scores of 5 – 7 for optimum health and performance.

*Pleasure/Working horses BCS should be 5 – 6

*Broodmares BCS should be 6 - 7

A horse maintained at optimum body condition will achieve better reproductive and performance efficiency!

The Condition Scoring System

Developed by Dr. R. Henneke

1. **POOR** Animal is extremely emaciated; spinal column is easily discernible, ribs; tailhead; bone structure of withers, shoulders, and neck easily noticeable; no fatty tissue can be felt.
2. **VERY THIN** Animal is emaciated; slight fat covering over base of spinous processes; transverse processes of lumbar vertebrae feel rounded; spinous processes, ribs and tailhead prominent; withers, shoulders, and neck structure faintly discernible.
3. **THIN** Fat buildup about halfway on spinous processes; transverse processes cannot be felt; slight fat cover over ribs; spinous processes and ribs easily discernible; tailhead prominent, but individual vertebrae cannot be identified visually; withers, shoulders, and neck accentuated.
4. **MODERATELY THIN** Slight ridge along back; faint outline of ribs discernible; tailhead prominence depends upon conformation, fat can be felt around it; wither, shoulders, and neck not obviously thin.
5. **MODERATE** Back is flat (no crease or ridge); ribs not visually distinguishable but easily felt; fat around tailhead beginning to feel spongy; withers appear rounded over spinous processes; shoulders and neck blend smoothly into body.
6. **MODERATELY FLESHY** May have a slight crease down back; fat over ribs spongy; fat around tailhead soft; fat beginning to be deposited along the side of the withers, behind the shoulders, and along the side of the neck.
7. **FLESHY** May have crease down back; individual ribs can be felt, but noticeable filling between ribs with fat; fat around tailhead soft; fat deposited along withers, shoulders, and along the neck.
8. **FAT** Crease down back; difficult to feel ribs; fat around tailhead very soft; area behind shoulder filled with fat; noticeable thickening of neck; fat deposited along inner thighs.
9. **EXTREMELY FAT** Obvious crease down back; patchy fat appearing over ribs; bulging fat around tailhead, along withers, behind shoulders, and along neck; fat along inner thighs may rub together.