

Beyond the Hay Days

Refreshingly Simple Horse Nutrition

UPDATED & EXPANDED 2ND EDITION

PROLOGUE

The horse is a spirit that lies so deeply buried within the human psyche that we often do not even realize it is there. And yet it is everywhere; there is no end to our fascination with these incredibly canny beasts. Even after 100 years of forsaking the horse for the horseless carriage (motorized transportation), the horse is still imbedded in our language. “Get back on the horse!” or “Quit horsing around!” are still common admonitions. On a summer day you might drive to a picnic in a vehicle rated in horsepower, eat sandwiches seasoned with horseradish sauce, then swat a few horseflies while playing a game of horseshoes. Look through any magazine—even one tailored to computer buffs—and you will see pictures of gracefully striding horses. Watch television on any given night and you will see ghostly images of the mythical, winged horse, Pegasus, morphing into a sporty new car.

Those of us who keep horses can only smile. We live a dream embraced by those who wish horses into their lives, only to find that they do not appear. Many people sell their homes in the city and, at no small expense, move to the country, just to be able to have a piece of that dream; a horse or two to ride and show. Others, like myself, have lived with horses for so long, a month in the tidal pools of New Guinea could not hide the fact from the nose of the common observer. We talk horses, we think horses, and we smell like horses. And we’re proud of it.

I have always had horses in my life. I have been kicked and bitten, stomped on, bucked-off, and slammed into more fences than I care to recall. I have hobbled out of the house on crutches to ask the horse who put me in that condition if he was ready for the next round. I’m sure you know what I mean. If all of this abuse had been heaped upon me by the federal government, I would be looking

for another country. But a horse is not a thing you can walk away from, or destroy. It is much too big for that; too big in sheer mass to manhandle, too big in spirit to deny.

From August of 1990 until April of this year, I was the president and CEO of a well-known company that derives nearly all of its revenues from the manufacture and sale of nutritional supplements for horses. It was not a job that I had dreamed of having, and I never felt that it suited my sensibilities, but it did set me on a seven-year mission to learn, as much as any simple horseman can, the best ways to help our horses through nutrition.

This book is the result of that 7-year search. In that time I have formulated a number of supplements that have been very successful in the marketplace, and equally successful for the horses in whose feed they ultimately ended up. But supplements are only the icing on the cake, not the cake itself. Most of the people who sought my advice over that time did not need supplements at all. They needed good, sound, basic nutrition; they needed to know what was inherently wrong with their feeding program, and how to correct it.

And that is my reason for writing this book. It was a fundamental decision, like drinking to slake a thirst, or eating to fill an empty belly. I had to write it because I owed it to the thousands of horse owners I have met and corresponded with over the years who needed a book such as this. People who, like all of us, wanted only the best for the beasts who are the keepers of our dreams.

Rex A. Ewing
July 1997

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO THE 2ND EDITION

As I began gathering research for this updated and expanded second edition, I found myself marveling at how much had changed about horse nutrition in the few years since the appearance of the first edition. Glucosamine now overshadows chondroitin sulfates as the premiere ingredient in joint-maintenance formulations; new findings on the importance of magnesium—a heretofore pedestrian mineral—have recently surfaced; and, as in human nutrition, the Omega fatty acids have orbited into the spotlight.

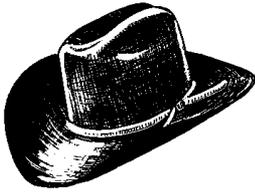
But I was equally heartened to see how much had remained the same. The basic requirements for the energy nutrients—protein, fat, and carbohydrates—have not changed, nor have the requirements for most minerals. This is good. If it ain't broke, don't fix it, as we're all fond of saying. It means that after millennia of searching for better ways of feeding our noble steeds, we have finally discovered a solid, workable foundation to hang our faddish embellishments on.

This does not mean, however, that the end of horse nutrition is in sight. Far from it. As long as we have our horses, we will ask them to do things they would never do of their own accord, and feed them things they could never hope to find in their natural environment. Moreover, we will continue to breed for certain characteristics and against others. As we do, we will forever change the morphology of our horses, for selective breeding is still largely a guessing game, and unexpected changes always accompany the favorable traits we hope to infuse into the equine gene pool. Slightly different animals will always require subtly different concentrations of nutrients to remain in optimum condition.

This is good—and bad. Good because there are still countless

advances waiting to be discovered in the world of nutrition (and no one satisfied with the status quo ever discovered anything), and bad because the market will forever have to endure the likes of hucksters and snake oil salesmen.

Hopefully, this updated and expanded edition will help you avoid the temptations so prevalent in a world where everyone is frantically searching for a panacea, and set you squarely on the path to solid horse nutrition.



Rex A. Ewing
January 2003