



Fact Sheet

SARACEN
HORSE FEEDS

Feeding For A Healthy Immune System

Obviously, the starting point to keep any horse healthy is to ensure a well balanced diet that is suited to that individual horse and his needs, with forage, most importantly, forming the basis of the diet. The rest of the diet needs to ensure suitable energy, quality protein, vitamin and mineral levels to keep the horse fit and healthy. Every horse needs a healthy immune system to fight off disease and it is also important in healing injuries and fighting infection.

Good immune health results from a balanced diet that contains the correct amounts and proportions of antioxidants and nutrients and in particular vitamins E, A, C and B complexes, trace minerals such as zinc and selenium and quality proteins. Generally speaking, providing that horses are fed the recommended amounts of the most suitable feed for a particular situation, then these requirements are more than adequately fulfilled and they will have a healthy immune system. It is only when certain factors come in to play that we may need more specific nutrition. For some horses the immune system can come under pressure, particularly if the horse is, for example, a performance horse that is working hard and is travelling frequently, so being exposed to lots of new places and horses; it is known that equine immune function decreases with age (this decline is not the result of poor feeding practice) or in horses that are sick or recovering from surgery or illness. These horses may require more aggressive nutrition to 'feed' and maintain a healthy immune system.

Hard Work And Travelling

Horses that are working hard have increased requirements for vitamins and minerals but we also need to consider that they will also be under a great deal of stress. Stress can impact on their ability to fight off disease.

There are many different performance horse feed rations available on the market and the one thing that these will all generally have in common is that they will be formulated to contain higher levels of key 'immune supporting' nutrients.

Vitamin E and selenium levels will be higher, as will the inclusion and level of B vitamins. Vitamin E and selenium are well known for their powerful antioxidant properties, which mean that they help to prevent free radical damage to muscles etc after heavy work. Selenium is required to maintain the correct functioning of vitamin E but is also a powerful antioxidant in itself.

Recent research from Kentucky Equine Research has shown that the source of vitamin E is also important with regards to its effect. Natural vitamin E has been shown to be more effectively absorbed (2-3 times more potent), utilized and retained in the tissues compared to traditional synthetic sources.

Performance horses are susceptible to exercise induced muscle damage. Research has shown decreased muscle enzyme activity and oxidative stress in performance horses supplemented with vitamin E.

Vitamin B12 is particularly important in the functioning of the immune system and most horses get adequate levels of B vitamins from a good fibre and forage based diet and also from the manufacture in the hindgut.

Performance horses are likely to have restricted access to pasture and may also have limited hay or haylage intake and certainly will have irregular meal times. These factors will compromise vitamin B production.

Vitamin B supplementation is therefore particularly useful for these horses and may even be injected by a vet for those horses that may be struggling at the end of a busy competition to fight off a virus or infection.



For those who know what they're on. SARACEN
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Older Horses

Older horses do have compromised digestive systems and actually absorbing and utilizing some of the key dietary elements is not as effective as it once was! On top of this, there is also a decrease in the functional capacity of the immune system and the number and function of lymphoid cells decreases (a group of infection fighting white blood cells that are produced in the bone marrow).

The implications of this are many but the main concern is that older horses may not respond appropriately to vaccinations and so may not be properly protected. This is an area of on-going research of particular importance as our equine population gets ever older!!

Specific veteran diets ensure optimum provision of quality protein, chelated minerals, vitamins including natural sources and high levels of antioxidants, providing that they are fed at the recommended feeding levels.

Additional B vitamins are very useful for older horses and these can often be topped up using supplements that are sometimes marketed as 'blood tonics'. They can also help with maintaining appetite and may even give your veteran a bit of an energy boost!

The best way to keep your horse's immune system healthy is to ensure that they have no vitamin or mineral deficiencies in their diet and that it contains quality sources of protein to provide essential amino acids (lysine and methionine). Ensure that you are feeding the correct amount of the correct feed and if in any doubt consult an equine nutritionist for advice.

- **FOR FURTHER TECHNICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRODUCTS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE www.saracenhorsefeeds.co.uk OR FOR A PERSONAL FEEDING PLAN PLEASE CALL OUR FEED HELPLINE 01622 718487**



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