

Naturally treating Equine allergies with long lasting results

by Sue Martin, Equine Naturopath from Natural Equine Health

Just like humans, horses can suffer from allergic reactions too. This is due to an unusually high sensitivity to certain substances which causes the immune system to become over reactive to foreign materials which are usually harmless (these are known as allergens).

The symptoms that you may notice if your horse is suffering from allergies may include, nasal discharge, wheezing and/or coughing, watery eyes, itchy skin or hives and head tossing. Your horse may also seem lethargic and lack patience and not perform at his usual high level. Of course this description covers a broad area and therefore it is also important to have a professional examine your horse thoroughly before assuming that your horse's symptoms are indeed due to an allergic reaction.

Over the years, it seems that there has been an increase in the prevalence of allergies amongst horses, with many owners lost as to the best course of treatment to take. So why is it that so many horses seem to be suffering with allergies? To answer this question and to successfully treat our horses, it is important to search for the cause of the problem rather than to treat the symptoms alone. If the cause is identified, the outcome will be favourable, whereas if we treat only the symptoms there is a risk that once the medication discontinues, the symptoms will reappear.

From a Naturopath's perspective we begin by looking at the "big picture". Environment – where is the horse kept? If the horse is stabled, is it kept on straw, shavings or sawdust? Would it be comfortable for you as a human to stay in this environment or is it dusty? What time of year is it? Have the pastures been treated and what variety of grasses and legumes are available in the paddock? Feed – Is your horse eating hay and if so, is it from a round bale where dust may be present as the hay is pulled out and consumed, or is the hay fed out dusty or high in certain grasses or legumes. During this time of year is there an abundance of insects, pollens and seeds. Exactly what is your horse's current diet? This is an area that needs to be looked at in detail as even natural feeds can cause allergies. It is always helpful to call in the advice of an Equine Naturopath/Equine Nutritionist to ensure that your individual horse is not reacting to the diet it has been placed on.

Once the cause of the allergy has been established the horse can be treated by removing the allergen where possible and also by providing the most appropriate supplementations via herbal medicine. Herbs which support and nourish the immune system are essential as well as herbs to support the nervous system. Each horse should be treated as an individual with herbs to also relieve the symptoms that the allergies have caused. Topical washes may also assist in treatment, however it is always essential to use treatments which strengthen the system from the inside, offering the horse long lasting health and vitality.

For more information about Herbal Medicine and Equine Naturopath Consultations please contact: Sue Martin – Equine Naturopath, Natural Equine Health www.naturalequinehealth.com.au • natural.equine@bigpond.com



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