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Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome

This is a medical condition that causes ulcers to form in the stomach of a horse ie a gastric ulcer is an erosion or loss of internal layer of the horses' stomach.

These are painful and can affect the performance and overall wellbeing of the horse.

Gastric Ulcers can be caused in each horse for different reasons - sick or stressed newborn foals, 2-4 month old foals that display colic signs, horses on prolonged high doses of anti- inflammatories such as 'Bute' and most commonly occur in high performance horses.

Equine Gastric Ulcers in the High Performance Horse.

Racing horses, equestrian and western skilled horses with rigorous schooling and fitness schedules are often predisposed to developing these gastric ulcers.

Associated Risks for Horses developing Gastric Ulcers:

- High grain low roughage diets
- Extended time between feeds (horses were designed to graze)
- Strenuous exercise, often on an empty stomach
- Being stabled
- Highly strung temperaments

Signs a Horse may Suffer Gastric Ulceration:

- Many show no specific signs
- Anxious or Nervous horses
- Reduced performance
- Taking a long time to consume feed
- Moving to and from feeder rapidly
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of body condition

Confirming your Horse suffers from Gastric Ulceration:

Gastric Ulcers can be diagnosed by veterinary gastric endoscopy. The endoscope or 'scope' is a long camera within a smooth flexible hose that is passed through the nasal passages down to the stomach. The vet is able to see the inside of the horses stomach and recognize ulcers if they are present.

Treating Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome

Treating gastric ulcers is simple however is on-going; an oral paste containing medication to reduce acid production in the stomach will be prescribed. This is given daily by the horse owner or trainer. A therapy dose is given until ulcer healing is seen on a repeat gastric 'scope', then a maintenance dose is continued while the horse is in work, some horses require treatment throughout spelling periods.

Altering management and training practices may reduce the incidence and severity of ulcer disease, for example; train out of a paddock instead of stable, modify the diet, and trying to find the training and living arrangements that make the individual horse more relaxed.

Enjoy Better Performance

The pain- free horse is more likely to have improved concentration and be happier to put in his best effort for you to enjoy the success of your sport.