

Support for Hard Working Horses
By Shari Frederick

You have purchased a healthy horse with consideration for type and disposition to accomplish the task you desire. You've researched and are satisfied with his health history and his 'horsenality'. You provide ample turnout in a natural environment with natural forage whenever possible and appropriate. Prior to exercise you allow for warm up and afterwards a cool down. You allow for a gradual work increase, rest, and relaxation. You utilize good management and a friendly training program. You select quality hay, providing various foods and grains as needed. You supply ample clean water. Now you want to supplement your horse's diet to make up for any lack of pasture intake, environmental stresses, denatured soils, extra work, and/or travel.

HHH: The demands and stress factors of the particular task or competition must be considered when selecting appropriate supplemental supports.

A racehorse requires speed and stamina to carry out fast, strenuous work, performs at maximum pressure during each race, requires special attention to tendons, and demands rapid recovery. Dressage horses perform complex movements placing considerable stress on lower limb joints and tendons, for example the hock joint during piaffe. Maximum energy over varied terrain is required of cross-country horses. The jumping horse is stressed at the hock joint, forelimb, suspensory and check ligaments, muscles, tendons, and disks between vertebrae. A pony, used for daily leisure riding, needs a gentle temperament. The horse preparing for a trail ride or a week's trekking needs support to cope with being ridden several hours in a day. Barrel racers need to be alert, flexible, and energetic to perform. The top class competitor requires stamina and peak performance whereas farm and Amish horses require sturdy constitutions for hard daily labors.

HHH: Supplements can help you and your horse achieve your goals by targeting specific areas of need.

Consider the feed value of your horse's diet (hay or forage analysis) before adding supplements. Consult your holistic veterinarian for any concerns. Supplement to strengthen and tone, to prevent weakness or breakdown, and to support both the physical and mental health needs of your horse. Check the product ingredient list - avoid sugar, artificial flavoring or coloring, chemical preservatives. Follow directions and heed cautions.

HHH: Supplementing is complementary and fortifying.

Consider supplements and other helps for your horse's situation. Options include and are not limited to the following:

Antioxidants:

Vitamins A, C (Ester C is a less acidic form), E; bioflavonoids, quercetin, superoxide dismutase (SOD), grape seed

Herbs - pine bark, dandelion, yarrow, raspberry leaf, parsley
Feed - fresh leafy pasture greens, buckwheat (high in bioflavonoids)
Products - Antioxidant Formula (Advanced Biological Concepts/ABC, 800-373-5971, www.a-b-c-plus.com); Vim and Vigor Daily Anti-Oxidant (The Natural Horse Vet, 877-873-8838, www.thenaturalhorsevet.net)

Attitude improvement:

Feed - whole grain; avoid sweet feed, excess sugar and starch
Herbs - hops (irritable, restless, aggressive)
Essential oils - Ylang Ylang
Flower Essences - Pine (Bach Flower Essences, Nelson Bach, 800-319-9151, www.nelsonbach.com); others - consider your horse's specific behavior
Note - vary routines to avoid boredom; check hooves, teeth, saddle, rider for balance and comfort; consider the possibility of ulcers; allow plenty of exercise

Back (weakness, soreness):

Vitamin C; minerals
Homeopathics - (see Inflammation); Nux vomica for lumbar backache
Massage - massage with arnica lotion
Treatments - gentle bodywork like Equine Touch (www.theequinetouch.com, 800-660-8923); appropriate stretching; magnetics; hydration and detoxification may be needed
Note - reduce or stop exercise; increase circulation; check hooves; provide a comfortable, balanced saddle suitable for the task; ride centered and considerately

Bone support:

Vitamin D, sunshine, calcium, magnesium, copper sulfate
Herbs - alfalfa, comfrey, dandelion, slippery elm, white willow bark, yarrow
Homeopathics - Equisetum
Feed - millet (silica), dolomite (calcium/magnesium), seaweed meal (boron/copper)
Poultice - flax/linseed/comfrey or cider vinegar
Note - provide time and opportunity for rest, recuperation, rehabilitation, and relaxation
Products - Rush Creek Mineral (1 to 1 calcium and phosphorus, ABC); Bone-Up (Riva's Remedies, 800-405-6643, www.rivasremedies.com)

Bruising:

Herbs - arnica, comfrey
Homeopathics - Arnica montana, Ruta graveolens, Calcarea fluorica (great for hoof horn bruises)
Essential oils - Geranium
Products - Injur-Ease (Riva's Remedies)

Dehydration:

Allow small amounts of fluid before, during and after competition or heavy workload, and cool-down to avoid colic, founder, dry choke
Herbs - liquid aloe vera
Products - Ions (daily electrolytes, ABC)

Depression:

Herbs - ginger, geranium

Essential oils - Chamomile, Lavender, Lemon Balm, Rosemary, Sandalwood

Flower Essences - Gorse, Sweet Chestnut

Digestion:

Enzymes for digestive support (give with meals; for therapeutic support, take 2 hours away from food), probiotics - Lactobacillus (l. acidophilus), streptococcus (s. faecium) and bacillus (b. subtilis)

Note - needs increase with heavy travel, worming, medication, overheating and excess or toxic feeds

Products - Digest or Digest Gold, Acid Soothe, Repair, Virastop, Mucostop, Allerase (enzymes, Enzymedica, 888-918-1118, www.enzymedica.com); ABC's Plus (Prebiotics); Probiotics (Riva's); Pro-Zyme (probiotics and digestive enzymes, Earth Song Ranch, 951-514-9700, www.earthsongranch.com)

Electrolytes:

Magnesium, potassium, sodium chloride (salt); provide free choice sea salt, kelp (bladderwrack), rocksalt block

Herbs - dandelion (5 roots/ day or several handfuls fresh leaves), borage, free choice kelp

Flower Essences - Impatiens

Make your own - 3 parts sodium chloride (salt) to 1 part potassium chloride (lite salt) - add it to feed, adjust the dose according to the day's activity level

Products - Ride-Rite (electrolytes for heavy training and competition; ABC); Red-Cal Plus (organic sea salt, electrolytes and minerals; The Natural Horse Vet); Equitea (balanced and palatable electrolytes, naturally flavored, Equine America, Inc., 800-838-7524, www.equine-america.com)

Energy:

Free choice calcium (rock mined dolomite)

Feed - soluble carbohydrate (oats), fiber (grass, hay, alfalfa), protein, unprocessed cold-pressed vegetable fats (flax/linseed, hemp seed, coconut oil)

Herbs - nettle, hawthorn (to tap hidden reserves in the final stretch), borage (for endurance)

Note - consider age and daily workload; vary routines to increase stamina; never overfeed protein. (Excess protein is often associated with slower racing times in Thoroughbreds. Often overfed, protein can cause sweating, raised respiratory and heart rates, increased drinking and excess excreted ammonia. In the blood, increased urea and ammonia can cause nerve irritability and digestive problems. Quality forage can provide adequate protein for horses with an efficient digestive tract.

Products - Omega Horseshine (omega-3 stabilized flax, Omega Fields, 877-663-4203, www.omegafields.com); Sta'N Power (a 10% fat source, Equine America); Pro-Pell (iron-rich multi-vitamin, contains dextrose and honey, Equine America)

Fear/Tension:

Vitamin B1 (thiamin), magnesium

Herbs - valerian root (banned at most shows and racing events), vervain, chamomile, hops, passion flower

Homeopathic - Calcarea carbonica, Aconitum napellus, Phosphorus, others

Essential oils - Lemon balm, Rose

Flower Essences - Rock Rose, Aspen, Rescue Remedy; Fear Essence

Treatments - acupuncture, TTOUCH (www.tteam-ttouch.com, 866-488-6824)

Note - look at history, training, nutrition; treat the whole horse; the goal is balance

Products - Calm-Aid Formula (herbal non-valerian powder, Meadowsweet Acre Herbs, 931-684-8838)

Hooves,

General:

Biotin, methionine, fatty acids, zinc, and magnesium

Herbs - rose hips, horsetail

Feed - millet, free choice seaweed, flax/linseed

Homeopathic - Silicea

Note - strong healthy hooves are made from using them; hooves must be able to function to produce tough horn so stay barefoot; lots of mileage, varied terrain, natural environment; consult a qualified hoof care provider to ensure well balanced, functional, regularly trimmed hooves; support with fitted hoof boots and pads if needed; provide appropriate nutrition; adequate circulation enables nutrients to reach hoof areas in need

Products - Hoof (30 mg biotin and 2,126 mg methionine, ABC); Hoof Condition (concentrate, Natures Balance Care, 866-821-0374)

Laminitis:

Vitamin C; coenzyme Q10; add supplemental probiotics, enzymes, essential amino acids and fatty acids, magnesium

Herbs - nettle, cleavers, devil's claw, milk thistle, garlic, dandelion, cat's claw, comfrey

Feed - low carbohydrates, high fiber and dolomite; avoid corn, barley, molasses and excess carbs or protein

Homeopathic - Arnica, Aconitum napellus, Belladonna, Calcarea fluorica (when extra bone formation is present); Thuja, Silicea (if after vaccination)

Essential oils: Rosemary, Thyme

Massage - may need daily to restore circulation and relieve muscle tension

Treatments - Laminitis Intervention Program (Chinese herb formulations and more, For Love of the Horse, 866-537-7336, www.forloveofthehorse.com); Equine Touch, acupressure (Tallgrass Animal Acupressure, 888-841-7211, www.animalacupressure.com)

Poultice - flax/linseed meal, bran and sea salt; or white turnips

Caution (especially Insulin Resistant and Metabolic Syndrome) - avoid stressed sugar-rich grass and hay; avoid chemically fertilized, pesticide/ herbicide treated, poor-soil-grown hay or pasture; avoid drugs, vaccinations, toxins, other bodily stresses; avoid causing further damage to the feet by shoeing or walking on hard ground (use fitted hoof boots and pads to provide needed comfortable exercise)

Note - laminitis can indicate systemic illness and toxicity as well as external hoof stressors; consult your holistic veterinarian; monitor the digital pulse; keep the horse's weight under control with exercise and measured feedings; never vaccinate an unhealthy horse

Products - Laminitis Blend (Meadowsweet Acre Herbs)

Navicular disease:

Vitamin B6, potassium phosphate

Herbs - nettle

Feed - cider vinegar (potassium), free choice seaweed and salt

Homeopathic - Calcarea fluorica, Hekla lava, Hepar sulphuris calcareum

Treatments - acupuncture/ acupressure; internal relaxation

Note - consider fitted boots and pads; avoid excess protein

Tools/prevention - get hooves trimmed regularly, don't shoe; Iridology (grid, Through the Eye International, 831-422-9182, www.equineiridology.com)

Products - Navicular Aid Blend (Meadowsweet Acre Herbs, 931-684-8838, www.meadowherbs.com)

Pain:

Mineral salt (free choice or in feed; licks are not enough)

Herbs - calendula soak/ bath, arnica lotion

Homeopathy - Arnica montana, Hekla lava, Bryonia, Hypericum

Treatments - fitted boots and pads for comfort; acupressure; magnets

Immune support:

Vitamins A, C, and E, antioxidants, pycnogenol, pine bark extract, copper

Herbs - garlic, maritime pine, milk thistle, yellow dock

Products - Super Vitamins Plus (21-day vitamin pack, ABC); Equi-Boost (Riva's); Super Immune Boost blend (Meadowsweet Acre); Daily72 Maintenance Formula (balanced liquid mineral extract from mined humic shale ore, Global Organics LLC, 623-932--1522, www.daily72.com)

Inflammation:

Vitamin C, bromelain, unpasteurized apple cider vinegar

Feed - buckwheat, hemp seed

Herbs - arnica, white willow bark, devil's claw, guaiacum, wintergreen, kelp, meadowsweet, St. John's wort (externally only), aloe vera, yucca, comfrey, marigold, dandelion, licorice; calendula herbal bath

Homeopathic - Arnica montana, Bryonia, Apis, Rhus toxicodendron, Belladonna

Essential oils - Chamomile, Geranium, Patchouli, Juniper, Chamomile, Rosemary

Massage - using St. John's wort, arnica lotion, or chili oil

Treatments - Equine Touch, magnets

Tools - Iridology

Products - Arnica Rub (Riva's); Arthritis-Aid Plus powder (Meadowsweet Acre)

Joints/ Tendons/ Ligaments/ Cartilage:

Vitamin C (8-10 grams per day), lipoic acid, chondroitin, manganese, copper and zinc;
MSM, glucosamine,
Feed - buckwheat (high in bioflavonoids), flax/linseed (fresh ground), ground limestone (feed grade)
Herbs - white willow bark, yucca (may test “false positive” in a drug screening), comfrey
Homeopathic - Rhus tox, Apis mellifica, Hepar sulphuris calcareum, Ruta graveolens, Arnica montana
Massage - using St. John’s wort, arnica lotion, or emu oil
Poultice - flax/linseed and comfrey, or wintergreen and arnica
Treatments - bioresonance (vibrational, BICOM, 800-750-7170, www.bicom2000.com); chiropractic, magnets, acupuncture, ice or heat on the area
Note - balance the hooves
Products - Joint Jolt (contains antioxidants and amino acids, ABC); Super Joint Zyme (Earth Song Ranch); Joint Check (The Natural Horse Vet); Joint Care (rice bran based, Vita Bran, 209-210-7515, www.vitabran.net)

Pain reduction:

Vitamins A, C, E and beta carotene
Herbs - chamomile, white willow
Homeopathic - Rhus toxicodendron; Silicea (specific to the knee), Hypericum (nerve damage)
Treatments - Equine Touch, acupuncture, moxibustion
Essential oils - Chamomile, Juniper, Lavender

Stiffness and soreness:

Vitamins C and E; selenium
Herbs - white willow bark, yucca, burdock
Topical - arnica lotion
Homeopathic - Rhus toxicodendron, Bryonia
Treatments - acupuncture, Equine Touch, massage, TTOUCH
Products - Joint Clear (Riva's); Sore No More (liniment, Equilite, 800-942-5483, www.equilite.com) ; Chapman’s Premium Liniment (800-828-8166, lastrup@family.net)

Stress:

Magnesium
Herbs - calendula (use internally), yarrow, maritime pine; juniper (on occasion, to soak up adrenalin, never if kidney stones); rosehips tea (use before, during and after competition)
Flower Essences - Rescue Remedy, Agrimony, Cherry Plum, Elm
Essential oils - Litsea cubeba, Sandalwood, Ylang Ylang
Treatments - massage, TTOUCH, Equine Touch
Tools - Iridology
Products - BALANCE (a unique formulation of essential oils, flower essences and other vibrational remedies) and Natural Vibration Stress Blends (5 different blends of flower and mineral essences), to balance stress (Mystic Horse, 800-616-0450,

www.mystichorse.com); Triple Crown Attitude Adjuster (blend of carefully selected plant materials, homeopathic preparations, chelated magnesium and probiotics for use in times of stress (Badminton Feeds, UK, 01425 658450, info@badmintonfeeds.co.uk, badmintonfeeds.co.uk)

Note - avoid rich grass, acid fertilizers on pasture, and overfeeding concentrates

Training:

Herbs - hawthorn (to tap reserves in the final stretch), borage (for courage and performance under stress), dandelion (for quick recovery), rosehips (for that winning drive). Herb tea - add a little rosehip tea to water before travel

Homeopathic - Arnica and Rhus tox for over-exertion

Essential oils - Rosemary (to help remember cues), Basil and Lemon (to keep focused)

Flower Essences - Chestnut Bud (to retain training and lessons), Scleranthus and Vervain, or Cerato (to keep their mind on the task), Larch, Oak and Vine (for staying power), and Larch (for self-confidence); keep Rescue Remedy on hand (for travel trauma or overexertion)

Products - Daily72 Performance Formula (Global Organics); Green Performance (100% spirulina for energy and alertness); BC2A and EPIC Daily (Bioniche Animal Health, 888-549-4503)

HHH: Supplement wisely.

Hard workers need appropriate supplements but over-supplementing is a waste of time, money, and resources and can create an added burden on the system. Know your horse and how he responds to specific tasks and heavy workloads. Monitor his response to supplements, allow reasonable time to evaluate benefits, and maintain accurate records. Consider one addition at a time so you can tell what is or is not helping. Observe, listen, learn, and make adjustments accordingly for the benefit of the horse.

About the author:

Shari Frederick BS, NMD, LE began her love of horses in 1975, showing quarter horses at the Fort Worth, TX stockyards. As a nutritional educator in over 15 countries worldwide over the past 25 years, she is a staunch supporter of "Truth in Labeling" for ALL manufacturers. Shari has a regular column in Equine Times and is a Safety-Certified Riding Instructor from the AAHS. Happy Horse Haven, 70-140 acres that Shari made available for equine rescue and rehabilitation, was recently established in January 2006. Each horse is placed on a specific nutritional program. 325-948-3451 shari@ktc.com