After Founder



Horses that have foundered might need special attention paid to their diets.



By Thomas R. Lenz, D.V.M., M.S.

A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO, WE DISCUSSED THE founder (laminitis) risk that rapidly growing spring grass poses to some horses and the need to place them in dry lots and/or limit their grass intake.

Since then, I've received several calls from people who now have their horses in stalls or paddocks and aren't sure what to feed them. When considering diets for horses that are laminitic (prone to founder or are already foundered), there are two distinct types of horses: those that foundered due to a change in diet and those that foundered due to something else, such as a retained placenta, endotoxemia caused by colic, hormonal imbalance, ground founder, etc.

The horses in the second group did not founder due to dietary triggers and usually do not require a special diet. However, like all horses, they should receive a well-balanced diet to keep them healthy. For the first group we've already discussed that many of them suffer from "metabolic syndrome" and are susceptible to gaining weight easily and foundering on lush spring pastures. Now that we've gotten them off the pasture and are either eliminating or limiting their access to grass, let's talk about providing them a good balanced ration until pasture growth has slowed and we can turn them back out.

Watch the Sweets

Most horses prone to founder are carbohydratesensitive and overweight. Therefore, it is important to avoid feeds that are high in sugar or starch, such as grain-based or sweet feeds.

Starvation isn't the answer to taking weight off these horses. Overweight horses that are starved back to pull weight off often metabolize excess amounts of fat resulting in high levels of fat in the blood stream which can

damage the horse's liver. A diet low in calories but high in fiber works best to allow them to gradually lose weight while staying healthy.

Remember that horses are designed to live on a forage-based diet. That means grass and/or hay and mature, stemmy grass hay is the best nutritional source for the overweight horse. Here in the Midwest where I live, hay that is cut in mid-late summer (July-August) is ideal for these types of horses, because it is high in fiber and low in nutritional value. Feed limited amounts (1.5-2 percent of the horse's body weight, which is roughly 18 to 22 pounds of hay for the average 1,100pound horse) of the hay divided into three or four feedings per day. The horse's intestinal tract is designed to handle small amounts of forage over a 16- to 18-hour period rather than large meals. Several feedings per day decrease boredom for horses in dry lots as well as the risk of colic. Add good clean water (at least 10 gallons per day) and salt, and you've pretty well provided all that they need.

If you're feeding last year's hay in order to reduce the horse's caloric intake, you may need to supplement the ration with protein, vitamins and minerals. Foundered mature horses need at least a 10 percent protein ration (1.5-2.0 lbs per day) to help their damaged feet heal, so keep the ration simple by feeding one supplement containing all three. Micronutrients such as biotin may also be beneficial, but remember they are micronutrients and should be fed in very small amounts.

If the Lamainitic horse is thin and needs calories, don't provide carbohydrate-containing grain, but rather feed beet pulp or forage-based feed like alfalfa cubes. If the horse is still underweight, add an edible oil such as corn oil to the diet. Lamainitic horses can handle calories from fiber and fat but not starch or sugar. Make sure you do not buy beet pulp that is mixed with molasses.

Other Founders

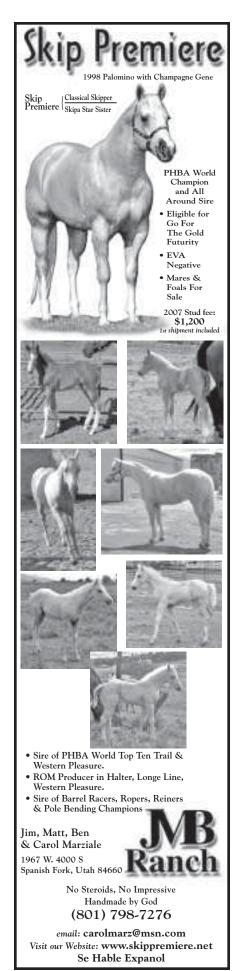
We have pretty much covered feeding horses that are prone to be overweight and founder easily following access to rapidly growing grass or grain, but there are [CONTINUED ON PAGE 238]



For more information on keeping your horse healthy, consult an American Association of Equine Practitionersmember veterinarian in your area. For a list of members, log onto www.aaep.org.







and smaller tracks from the late 1960s to early 1980s.

Survivors include her daughter, Shelly Clower of Gainesville; son and daughter-in-law, James and Julie Banks of Gainesville; step-daughter, Beverly Perry of Canyon; five grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and brother and sister-in-law, John and Candice Singleton of Texarkana.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, E.J. "Yack" Banks; and brother, David Singleton.

Memorial contributions may be made to Noah's Ark Animal Rescue.

LUCILLE MCCAFFERTY

AQHA life member Lucille McCafferty, 62, died January 23. She and her husband, Wayne, resided in Atlantic, Pennsylvania. They raised and showed foundation-bred Quarter Horses for many years in the Pittsburgh and Meadville, Pennsylvania, areas. She enjoyed researching Quarter Horse pedigrees. She and her husband were founding members of the Western Pennsylvania Riding and Driving Club. She is survived by her husband.

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also nutrition considerations for horses that have foundered after a retained placenta, colic, road founder, etc.

Founder and the resultant inflammation causes a lot of damage to the laminae of a horse's feet and often makes them susceptible to refoundering when exposed to even a small amount of grain. Even in horses that are not sensitive to high carbohydrate or high sugar diets, it's a good idea to feed a low grain, forage-based diet.

If you have any questions on feeding your foundered or founder-prone horse, your best sources of information are your local equine veterinarian or equine extension nutritionist.

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