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Supplements That Solve Problems



Does your horse have weak hooves? A dull coat? Achy joints? Dietary supplements for horses are available to address a wide variety of issues. But for the best results, take a targeted approach.

Ask three horsemen about the role of supplements in a horse's diet and you'll likely get three different answers. As the number of available products has grown over the past two decades, so too has the debate over how and when they are best utilized.

Yet one rule is universally recognized: "Give only what a horse needs." Every veterinarian and nutritionist will tell you that unnecessary or overzealous supplementation isn't only a waste of money, it can lead to nutritional imbalances. For instance, a horse given a vitamin supplement in addition to a grain fortified with vitamins may ingest an overdose of certain nutrients, which can be detrimental to his health. It's much, much safer and more effective to first identify your horse's dietary needs and then shop for a supplement that meets them.

The tendency to reverse this order is understandable. If your friend's mare looks fabulous after being started on a particular supplement, for instance, it's tempting to put your own horse on it. The mare, however, may have been missing something in her diet or had a specific problem that your own horse does not. In that case, you won't see the same benefits. In fact, your horse may have a different deficit or need that only a different supplement can address.

Fortunately, supplements are available to address nearly every problem a horse can have, from poor-quality hooves to creaky joints to excitable behavior. Here's a survey of the basic

categories of equine supplements available, along with a rundown of the ingredients you are most likely to find in each one. Once you've had a look, discuss your horse's needs with your veterinarian and get ready to go shopping.

Calming supplements contain nutritional and herbal ingredients aimed to "settle" anxious horses by affecting the nervous system.

Common ingredients:

- **magnesium**, a mineral that plays a role in hundreds of biochemical reactions within the body, including muscle and nerve function
- **thiamine** (vitamin B1), a compound found in fresh forages that helps the body convert carbohydrates and fat into energy and is critical to proper function of the nervous system
- **valerian**, an extract from the dried root of the flowering plant *Valeriana officinalis*, which contains compounds believed to interact with certain neurotransmitters; used since the times of the ancient Greeks to relieve restlessness, anxiety and insomnia
- **chamomile**, an extract derived from the flowers of the perennial herbs *Matricaria recutita* or *Chamaemelum nobile*; used for thousands of years to treat insomnia and anxiety
- **L-tryptophan**, an amino acid that is a precursor to the neurotransmitters serotonin, which induces calming and melatonin, which encourages sleep
- **taurine**, the organic acid abundant in animal

tissue that plays a significant role in many neurologic functions

- **inositol** (vitamin B8), an organic compound integral to the health of cell membranes; research suggests that inositol supplementation can aid in treatment of panic disorders, bipolar depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder in people
- **raspberry leaves**, the dried foliage of the raspberry bush, are high in vitamin C, tannins and other nutrients; long thought to affect muscle tone
- **alpha-casozepine**, a protein derived from milk that is believed to have a natural calming effect on nursing youngsters

Special considerations: Many sport and show associations restrict the use of some calming agents prior to competition.

Joint-care supplements aim to support the health of structures such as the cartilage between bones and the synovial fluid in the joint spaces.

Common ingredients:

- **glucosamine**, an amino sugar, is one of the building blocks of cartilage production and repair
- **chondroitin sulfate**, a large protein molecule, is a constituent of connective tissues and cartilage
- **hyaluronan** (hyaluronic acid), a key structural component of synovial fluid, connective tissue and cartilage
- **MSM** (methylsulfonylmethane), is an organic compound that is a source of sulfur, which is necessary for the production of collagen
- **yucca**, an extract from the roots of a species of yucca, a flowering desert plant; a source of saponins, compounds with both antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties
- **avocado-soybean unsaponifiables** (ASU), extract from the oils of avocado and soybean; early research suggest ASU slows the production of some inflammatory chemicals in the body, thereby protecting cartilage

- **boswellia**, an extract from the gum resin of *Boswellia serrata*, a tree native to India; research suggests that it has anti-inflammatory properties.

- **ascorbic acid** (vitamin C), the familiar water-soluble vitamin and antioxidant; required for the synthesis of collagen and connective tissue.

Special considerations: The ingredients in joint supplements are among the most studied by scientists. However, the levels vary from product to product. Read and compare labels to select a supplement with the desired amount of your preferred active ingredients.

Hoof supplements are designed to improve the quality of hoof horn, leading to stronger hooves.

Common ingredients:

- **biotin**, a B vitamin that supports the production of keratin, a protein that forms the basis for hair and hoof horn; studies have shown that biotin supplementation improves the growth

The Supplemental Advantage



OCD Pellets

Doc's Products, Inc. offers a revolutionary equine supplement, OCD Pellets, which features a breakthrough formula that maintains, protects and restores bone and joints by supplying pharmaceutical-quality ingredients that encourage new cartilage growth and joint lubrication while providing relief from inflammation. OCD Pellets and COS Pellets are the only 2-in-1 (bone and joints) supplements on the market. www.docproductsinc.com; 866-392-2363



Platinum Performance® GI

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response, reproduction, metabolism, bone health, gastrointestinal function and more. This veterinary-developed formula provides

a gastrointestinal-focused approach to total equine health by providing omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, vitamins and trace minerals, along with BioSponge®, prebiotics, probiotics and glutamine for GI support. Supports wellness and horses in training, during travel, with digestive health concerns, difficulty maintaining weight, loose stool or occasional diarrhea, on antibiotics or NSAID therapy. Also helpful for senior horses.

www.PlatinumPerformance.com;
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Foxden Equine, Inc.

Foxden Equine researches, develops and markets a broad range of high-quality nutritional products to benefit the health and well-being of horses. The manufacturer of Quiescence (for cresty necks and founder) and Linpro (for hoof growth and general health), Foxden is also known for its products TractGard, KeraFlex HA, Foxden Flex HA, Stability EQ, Muscle Mix, Equinamity, Stability EQ Plus, Foxden Flex IR, AceytL-Carnitine, Balance EQ, Electrolytes and Immubal. www.foxdenequine.com;

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Kentucky Performance Products

That wonderful feeling you get when it is just you and your horse: At Kentucky Performance Products, we understand that feeling, because we have horses of our own. It's why we do what we do to help keep your horse healthy and sound. It's why our targeted supplements are made using scientifically proven formulas and high-quality ingredients. It's why we offer a money-back satisfaction guarantee on every bucket of supplement you purchase. It's why you can count on our supplements to deliver the results you expect. It's why the horse that matters to you matters to Kentucky Performance Products. KPPusa.com



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The Supplemental Advantage

Horseshoer's Secret Extra Strength Hoof & Connective Tissue Supplement

Athletic talent and pedigree alone won't carry your horse into the winner's circle or down the trail. He needs good feet and strong legs under him. That's why Farnam developed Horseshoer's Secret® EXTRA STRENGTH Hoof & Connective Tissue Supplement. Formulated by an equine PhD nutritionist and endorsed by farriers, this supplement provides extra benefits where your horse needs them most, supporting tendons and ligaments as well as hooves. Veterinarian-recommended Horseshoer's Secret® EXTRA STRENGTH supplement provides optimum nutrition—including 25 mg of biotin per 2 oz. serving—to keep hooves durable, hydrated and flexible. Plus, the unique extruded nuggets support the proper digestion of nutrients. For more information, visit Farnam.com.



Laser Sheen Skin & Coat Supplement

Formulated by an equine PhD nutritionist and recommended by veterinarians, Farnam® Laser Sheen® Skin & Coat Supplement provides a show-stopping shine that will capture the attention of any audience. This supplement contains ceramides—the same fatty acids found in many beauty products for humans—to help retain moisture for a velvety soft coat, as well as help support skin hydration. A proper balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids supports skin and coat health. It also contains a probiotic to support proper digestion of nutrients, allowing your horse to get the most benefit from each ingredient. For more information, visit Farnam.com.



rate and quality of hoof horn

- **methionine**, an amino acid that contains sulfur, an element the body uses to produce keratin
- **lysine**, an amino acid that plays a role in the formation of collagen, the absorption and retention of calcium, and tissue growth and repair
- **zinc**, the mineral essential to the formation and maintenance of cartilage, bone, skin, hoof horn and hair
- **copper**, a trace mineral critical to bone and hoof formation
- **pyridoxine** (vitamin B6), an organic compound essential for the production of amino acids that support hoof growth
- **calcium carbonate**, a mineral derived from eggshells and other sources that provides calcium
- **calcium pantothenate**, a compound of pantothenic acid, which is an essential component in the synthesis of amino acids used in hoof and hair production

• **flaxseed**, the whole seeds or oil from the seeds of the flax plant; a source of omega-3 fatty acids thought to promote hoof growth

Special considerations: It takes approximately one year for a horse to grow a new hoof from coronary band to the ground. Because supplements can only influence new hoof growth, it may take many months to see results from these products.

Digestion supplements are formulated to balance the gut flora in a horse's intestinal tract, reducing the likelihood of colic and diarrhea.

Common ingredients:

- **probiotics**, combinations of bacteria and yeasts, including *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Enterococcus faecium*, intended to support populations of intestinal flora that are necessary for digestion
- **prebiotics**, the sugars and other nutrients that provide nutritional support for the beneficial bacteria that reside in the gut
- **yeast culture**, a strain of yeast that assists in the activity of beneficial bacteria in the hindgut



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Introducing

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Equine Wellness & Performance Formula + Digestive Care

THE HEALTH OF THE EQUINE GUT is correlated to gastrointestinal (GI) function, metabolism, immunity and more. This is why we have been hard at work researching, formulating, testing and conducting trials with **Platinum Performance® GI**. This gastrointestinal-focused approach to **total horse health** supports wellness and is recommended for horses in training or competition as well as senior horses. Platinum Performance® GI can help maintain health while traveling, during antibiotic or NSAID therapy and for horses that have digestive health concerns or difficulty maintaining weight.



OVERALL WELLNESS

This veterinary-developed formula provides omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, vitamins and trace minerals, along with Bio-Sponge®, prebiotics, probiotics and glutamine for GI support.



DIGESTION

Prebiotics nourish the "good" bacteria in the gut and support the digestion of fiber, while probiotics are important for absorption of nutrients.



IMMUNITY

An estimated 70-80% of the immune system resides in the gut. Nourishing the beneficial bacteria can help support a healthy gut barrier and microflora balance.

To find the right Platinum Performance® solution, and to learn about the science behind the supplements, call or visit our website, or speak with your equine veterinarian.

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• **dehydrated alfalfa meal**, a source of highly digestible fiber

Special considerations: Many digestive supplements contain live organisms, which can be damaged or killed by exposure to heat and light. Read and follow any storage directions listed on the label.

Skin and coat supplements

are formulated to support the production of keratin, collagen and other building blocks of the coat and skin.

Common ingredients:

• **pyridoxine** (vitamin B6), a compound essential for the production of amino acids that support hoof and hair growth; deficiency has been linked to skin inflammation and eczema in people

• **biotin** (vitamin B7), a compound that plays a key role in the production of keratin, a protein that forms the basis for hair

• **flaxseed** (linseed), the whole seeds or oil from the seeds of the flax

plant; contains omega-3 fatty acids, which are thought to support healthy hair growth

• **riboflavin** (vitamin B2), nutrient that aids in the production of healthy skin and hair

• **lysine**, an amino acid that plays a role in the formation of collagen as well as tissue growth and repair

• **zinc**, a mineral essential for the formation of bone, cartilage, hoof horn, skin and hair

• **folic acid** (vitamin B9), an organic compound necessary for the production and maintenance of new cells, particularly those with short life spans, such as skin cells

• **calcium pantothenate**, a compound of vitamin B5 and a critical component of an enzyme needed in the synthesis of amino acids used in hair production

• **niacinamide**, a derivative of niacin (vitamin B3); preliminary studies suggest it may be useful in treating skin disorders in people

• **methionine**, an amino acid that contains sulfur, an element the body needs to produce keratin; deficiencies in people can cause skin lesions

Special considerations: Poor skin and coat quality can be indicators of overall nutritional deficiencies, parasitic infection or systemic illness. Before dismissing your horse's dull coat as a cosmetic issue, check with your veterinarian to ensure that it doesn't signal a bigger concern.

Supplements can make a big difference in a horse's health, looks and performance but, of course, they are not magic potions. They cannot make up for poor management or nutrition, cure serious physical ailments or reverse the aging process. When you shop smart and with a clear purpose in mind, however, supplements can round out a horse's diet for optimum health. ■

This article was previously published in EQUUS 387, December 2009.



Photo: Stacey Nedrow-Wigmore



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