

Hi everyone! This is the AskAnnie Podcast horse girl reviews on products you use!

Due to the challenges of modern horse keeping many horses can benefit from the support of supplements to help them look and feel their best. Every horse is different so SmartPak has made it easy to create a customized supplement program for your horse. With over three hundred fifty supplements available and a team of equine health experts on staff to help you choose between them SmartPak is the smartest place to get your horse what he needs. Visit SmartPak dot com or call one eight hundred four six one eight eight nine eight to learn more about how SmartPak can help you take great care of your horse today.

We feature a special guest on this episode, and I'd like to thank SmartPak and their staff veterinarian and medical director Dr Lydia Gray for being a part of this episode. Well thank you Dr Lydia Gray for being here today. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Sure, so you've already figured out with the doctor that I am humanitarian equine veterinarian is how I think of myself and I am retired from practice and I and the staff veterinarian and medical director for SmartPak now. Can you tell us a little bit how you got into horses and a little bit about your equine background? Well, I think a lot of people can relate that I've always loved horses and was one of those horse crazy little girls and I read the Walter Farley Black Stallion books. That series? Yes, I do! Ya and I'm sure I annoyed my parents because every year for Christmas when I wrote out my list, every single line was "I want a horse, I want a horse, I want a horse." Finally. the summer between my seventh and eighth grade year so what your thirteen ish I got my first horse and that was fabulous! I have had several horses past then, and I discovered dressage pretty early on and that seemed to resonate with me, but I've done a lot of different sports. The horse I have now was a very versatile Trakehner and I competed in dressage with him through 3<sup>rd</sup> Level, combined driving through pre-limb, and he's done some hunters and right now we're playing a little bit with side saddle. Wow, side saddle? That's really cool! How did you get into that? I went to the World Equestrian Games in 2010 when they were in Lexington, KY and in between some of the competitions, there's like a ring where they just demonstrate different breeds and disciplines and things. his woman came in wearing a beautiful Wedgwood blue writing habbot and she was riding side saddle on an Arabian chestnut and I went "Oh my gosh I want to be here!" Ever since then I've sort of kept my eye out for, I have the perfect horse for it as far as temperament and confirmation and I finally met a sidesaddle certified trainer in my area and got started and then was able to show recognized dressage last year. That was kind of a bucket list item for me! Congratulations, you really seem to seek things out and then just go for it! Kind of going into your degrees, I did a little bit of research and you have quite the collection. Can you tell us a little bit about your education? So I knew pretty early on that I wanted to be a vet. So, I think for me the pathway was in animal science degree. Pre-vet, you get all of your requirements. I did that at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, so I ended up with a bachelor's degree or a bachelor's science B. S. whatever, but they didn't give me, they changed midway and they have given me an agricultural science degree and I'm like I said I'm like "what is that?" so I went into vet school there in Illinois so I got the DVM AND I also had an interest and took some classes as an undergrad in marketing and communication and PR and so after vet school I went back to school. It was at the University of Illinois but at their Springfield campus because that's close to where I was practicing. I got a Master of Arts in interpersonal and organizational communication. Wow! That's really cool! Well-rounded it sounds like! Yeah, I try! Going back to you were talking about in the beginning I found that you did have your own veterinary practice before working for SmartPak. Can you tell us what you mainly focused on and how this experience helps in your role now? sure so and it wasn't my practice I was a lowly associate

veterinarian I didn't own it. It was a mixed animal practice in central Illinois. Mixed animal means you do everything from horses to cattle to swine to dogs and cats and one day even there was a, as my boss was leaving, he was like oh let's check the schedule before you leave because you know I was a new vet. There was something at three o'clock called an AJ. I'm like, what is that I'm not sure I can do that by myself. Turned out to be a hedgehog! Yea in mixed animal practice you see everything. But I was the main or only equine vet and so I slowly built up that clientele over the year. They had some but that's what I wanted to do so I got equipment and training and just hit that hard. What was tough about it was since I was the only one it was me 24/7. So, we'd work all day then you'd get emergency calls, and, in this time, I was trying to get my master's degree and also doing some work at the university of Illinois as a coordinator. So, it was challenging, and it was one of these things where you can't even go see a movie because your pager goes off, or you'd be in the grocery store and I don't think people realize you're probably abandoned a lot of carts of groceries. Then you asked how it prepared me for this SmartPak job. yes, I think I think practicing I think every veterinarian no matter what they would do in the long run should practice. Get a feel for that, but while I was there like it wasn't busy enough, I also redesigned our logo in their brochures, and I hosted client education events and that's something I'm still really involved with today at SmartPak. Yeah, that sounds so interesting and kind of going into the next question you were also the American Association of Equine Practitioners director of owner education. Right! So how did that role come about, it sounds like a pretty perfect fit after doing what you're doing for that for the private practice! Right so I was in practice and it I think it started with the dean of the vet school at Illinois saw me an even and he's like "Hey you want to come back and work for me so?" Sure! I took on a role it wasn't a full time clearly, wasn't even half time, but it was just a of a program coordinator of something called the executive donor program. So, it was three days every other month we would bring vets on campus and we teach them a variety of business and communication and marketing and even like personal development skills. While I was doing that I was involved in committees and councils and task forces for AAEP and also for AVMA that's the American Veterinary Medical Association. The executive director of AAEP Gary Carpenter, he said "Hey when you going to work for me?" So, I'm like well I already have two jobs, he's just like work part time! Their headquarters are at the Horse Park in Kentucky in Lexington, which is very cool and so what they, this was this was their first ever director donor education so as a brand position yeah and I built a standalone website for horse owners and that's now been rolled into their vet member website. I wrote horse health article something I did even back in my vet school days. It's how I paid to go to school you know I kept doing that client education event stop so there was a horseman's day at the big vet convention that I ran and then also was involved in like member services and student programs. So also well rounded! Yeah, definitely and how does that help your role that SmartPak again today? Well so one of the things that I spend a lot of my time it is at is marketing or communicating to veterinarians and making sure they know everything that SmartPak has to offer them and their clients and one of them is we sponsor client education events at veterinary clinics. So, if a vet clinic you know, they call up and they say "Hey I'm having like two hundred clients over for an open house can you provide some giveaways or some brochures? Say on Colic Care?" So, we send them stuff and help them put on it and nice fun event for their clients. Yes, I really help to educate horse owners on a variety of health things. Exactly! Because they'll have a couple lectures and one of the lectures might be on colic which ties in nicely if they can then hand out a brochure on our colic or colic surgery reimbursement. So how did you end up moving from there to SmartPak? So, after AAEP, I went to I was executive director of a Humane Society which you can guess is a rescue horse rescue and there I gained experience in all sorts of new things through

grant writing, fundraising, humane investigation, I lobbied at the state and federal levels, coordinated volunteers, and I became familiar with SmartPak because when we'd rescuer or impound a lot of older horses with joint issues and they will go on a joint supplement and then I saw a post by SmartPak. I don't even remember where was looking, they were looking for a veterinarian to be on staff and I called in and started interviewing it and I remember one of the key people that I interviewed with early on was one of the founders Paul, and after speaking with me a while he went you know, I I think you might be genetically engineered for this position! So, you have a background in in writing articles and putting on educational events and I had a big network of veterinarians. I had lots of people in different disciplines that I knew so it was a really good fit. Yeah, and you're also a reputable and trusted source so people really inkstand what you're saying. Exactly and I'm a rider and a driver too so I mean I get right get what horse owners are dealing with. This for Trakehner I have now I mean I love him but my goodness he's he had a colic surgery he has PSSM, and shivers and he's a head shaker and is on and inhaler because he has airway obstruction, he has everything! Oh my goodness! Yeah I know so much! Because I've done it with him! Yeah you are a horse owner! So what does it what does your normal day at SmartPak entail? I think I mentioned already do a lot of communicating our marketing with veterinarians and so that could be a direct mailing, it could be print ads, I coordinates and go to a lot of trade shows and also that the sponsoring of the client education events at various clinics around the country. I think I also brought up Colic Care, so I review enrollments applications and I also review claims and answer any questions that come up about anything having to do with that program. I spend a lot of my time right now on the research of us of our supplements, so I'm finishing, well some studies I do myself but more of them I coordinate with an investigator at the university. So % right now we're finishing up one with the ingredient's supplier, ones kicking off but kicked off Monday at Louisiana State University LSU and I've got one kicking off in about three weeks at Texas A and M University. So, kind of keeping all those balls juggling and you got to provide them with product, and you have to write protocols and to do the desk research on the references and there's a lot of moving parts to research projects and to have three going at once is a little bit terrifying. Yeah that's incredible and all to make a better product for the everyday horses owner right? Yeah it just to show people that the product that that we are providing is some we have some excellent published research on our SmartPak products which is for stomach help and it was actually presented at the AAEP annual convention so we got in front of a lot of veterinarians and so now when the veterinarian is dealing with the horse with say stomach issues they'll prescribe a pharmaceutical and say "I think based on this research at the same time you should probably add this this gastric health supplement they seemed to work nicely together to get your horse's stomach where we want it." A couple of the things I do is if you've been on the website, I deliver a lot of content. I write a lot of articles, there's the ask the vet videos, there's a nice vet blog. I also train the customer care team I mean we have a world customer service team that answers the phones, and they'll email though click to chat you can contact them in a variety of ways for whatever help you need. Before they work on the phone, they get a lot of training in the equine health nutrition and then they get what I would call as a veterinarian CE or continuing education so we don't stop when they go on the phone to say okay good luck, but we continue to provide them with information about our products about horse health in general and how they should be fed and also about the other products in the brands that we sell. So, they're very knowledgeable about any anything that you might want to purchase from us. Yeah, and like you said that CE making sure that they're staying up to date on everything and all the research that you're doing to make sure that the customer gets the best product for their situation. Exactly yeah! So, your kind of going into this but why is it important to SmartPak to help educate horse owners in

nutrition and horse health? I think so that they select the appropriate product for their horse because when I'm writing the training, whether it's you know internal to our employees or I'm speaking at an event, I always say that it starts with you know healthy horse. You involve your vet and then providing a complete and balanced diet and then based in forage and then once that's done then you look and see what issues does might take our individual horse have in where I can provide support in addition to what he's getting from his normal everyday diet. So, you know the one thing my horse has very good feet, so I don't have him on a hoof supplement, there are lots of horses who don't have good feet and can benefit from a biotin-based product it is been shown to improve that the hardness and the integrity and the resilience of the hoof. We've talked about gut health and hoof health care now what other products to SmartPak have to offer, can you kind of give us an overview? Do you mean the supplement lines or the whole range of products? Yes, supplements specifically! I'm going to try to go down like in order probably the most popular is joint. I mean when I thought my horse as a four-year-old knowing a lot of veterinarians around the country the staff vet at Nutrmax, they make Consequent, she gifted me with his very first joint supplement and you know you have a new horse here's your horse, get him going on a joint supplement right away and I thought that was it was great, and I've never forgotten it. That's a great gift! It's it's a lot of them research on reading on joints and joint supplements and how they work in the different ingredients and stay up to date and I I really do believe that putting a horse on a joint supplement early on is sort of the best medicine. If you can get those components and those building blocks of normal healthy joint tissue the cartilage in the fluid and that in there available to use as needed because you know the problems in joints are like a daily wear and tear jerking sure they're talking happened, but it's really a lifetime of use and so let's give them the support they need from the get-go. Yeah help them be the best that he can be! Yes! We talked about joint, hoof and gastric support and in conjunction with colic care is hind gut support. So, we divided the horse's digestive system, massive thing that is, into the fore gut, which is that the stomach and small intestine, the hindgut which is that the large intestine the colon and cecum, and so there's different ingredients that work to maintain health in each of those areas. Like in the in the hindgut might be things like probiotics, prebiotics, yeast is a big one those kinds of things just to stabilize the gut and help extract the most nutrition that the horse can out of what it's being fed and maybe even protect a little bit against changes you know when the spring comes and the lush grass comes up, but people don't what people don't know is that the grass can be just as dangerous in the fall as it goes into dormancy. Joint, hoof, stomach, and hindgut, a calming I think it's a big category for us, skin and coat, there's probably you know twenty to thirty categories but those are probably the big ones. Do you have a favorite or one that you see those prevalent? Well, I think I think like I mentioned joint is probably the bestselling but to me it's not as much of a favorite for me as what does the horse need after you know you've looked at the diet you provided what he needs based on that the horse's nutrient requirement and then what are still some problem areas. So, I do think though that said that omega three fatty acids and probably vitamin E are my go to's like that's probably the first thing I would ask a horse owner if your horse is getting the right amount and ratio of. That's really interesting! What health related resources are available to horse owners at SmartPak to help them better understand this? We have a horse health library that has tons and tons of articles about a wide variety of topics from all sorts of diseases and conditions to even how to select a supplement and then how to know if it's working. There's also tons and tons of videos, there's the ask the vet blog where people have written in and with the specific question and I try to answer the ones that aren't so specific as to only apply to that person but ones I get asked a lot and so I think I think that a lot of people probably have the same question. Like electrolytes for example, you

know and how to cool up off a horse in the summer, when it is too hot to ride and vice versa in the winter I get those questions on a seasonal basis. One resource I think is probably overlooked because that's a little bit hard to find is our ingredient glossary. If you have any questions about you know glucosamine, sulfates, turmeric, omega three fatty acids, vitamin E, you can go to our ingredient glossary and read a little paragraph about each one and then understand them better. Then the newest things that we've developed these resource centers there's a colic resource center, there is a senior horse resource center, and it's not really any new information, but we made it if that's your topic of interest to colic or senior horse, we have gathered all of our resources together into one place to make it easy for you to look through them all. So, whether you like to listen to things, to watch videos, to read, to printout list, it's all there in one place conveniently located for you. Seems like it's really accessible to horse owners where they need it. Exactly! So, what is your favorite role if you had to choose what's your favorite thing that you do that SmartPak? I think it's a variety of things that I get to do that, and I get to communicate and work with veterinarians I get to interact with horse owners and I also think that in practice you might have a couple hundred clients, four or five hundred maybe a thousand, but here in this role, I no pressure, but I get to influence many more horses and horse owners than that so it's kind of a big, big request. You know but I also feel like I'm doing some good out there. yeah really getting to help out a lot of people! It motivates me to stay current and up to date with all of the science in medicine. Yeah definitely! if there was one message that you could pass on a horse owners regarding horse health and nutrition products, what would it be? Well I think people who have watched any of my videos will have noticed that quite a few times I encourage people to keep track of things they notice in their horse and exercise programs, medications, so keeping a journal I think is really important because by doing that you discover like that's how I discovered my horse and PSSM because I would take him to a show and he would act funny and then he would do these certain behaviors at home and finally I added up and I said you know these all point to this one condition and so then I began to pursue a diagnosis and treatment. So, if horse owners do that on their own horses, they might discover that a horse is losing weight, well here's maybe why or horse is not losing weight and they need to like an easy keeper is packing on the pounds maybe if you look in your journal, you'll find that you for whatever reason had to back off your exercise and then they started gaining weight because of that. So, I think keeping track of things and observing your horse closely is probably the best piece of advice I can share. Yeah, that's really beneficial I think I might start one actually, that's really good advice. Well, that's all the questions that I have was there anything else that you wanted to talk about. No, I think we hit the high points, I got to mention my wonderful horse Newman and it's good! Awesome well thank you Lydia I really appreciate you being on the podcast and you talking to us.

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