

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

We feature a special guest on today's episode, and would like to thank Russell Mueller, Nutrena's US Retail Equine Marketing Manager for being a part of this week's episode.

Now there's more to love from SafeChoice. Nutrena feeds has updated the product line to offer even more balanced nutrients, and more products to choose from—all with a great taste your horses will enjoy. So, whether you're looking for more performance results, or simply healthy benefits for more quality time together, you'll get more peace of mind when you feed SafeChoice. See what's new and find a retailer near you at NutrenaWorld.com/SafeChoice.

Thank you for joining us today Russell! Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your life prior to Nutrena? Yes, this is Russell Mueller, I'm the Equine Product and Marketing Manager for Nutrena, for the US business. My life before Nutrena, I grew up in horses. I showed my first horse at the age of 2. My family showed horses and I grew up in central Kansas. Started showing Appaloosas and it eventually changed and converted to Quarter Horses when I was in high school. From there my dad was a farrier, and so I grew up not only did he train horses, but he shod horses. He ended up getting hurt and ended up going to work for the local feed mill and so when I turned 16, I also went to work for him in the feed mill as a summertime job. Kind of started down my path of combining feed with my passion and lifelong experience with horses. From there I figured I didn't want to work in the feed mill for the rest of my life, so I did go on and get a master's degree in equine nutrition. So, I understood the nutritional logic and nutrition and nutrients and all the science that went into making the feed and tried to wrap it into one package for my career since then. Awesome, and I did some research and found that you give back to that nutritional research, you do some specialized equine nutritional talks. Can you give us a little bit of insight on those? Yea, you know when I was going through grad school as a graduate student you always TA or help your professor teach and I really enjoyed the education and the teaching part. I maybe didn't like the interaction I got with some of the students. They were just going through a class but when I started my career what I found and I still, it's probably the number one thing I enjoy doing today, is giving back and educating. Whether it's horse owners or veterinarians or feed retailers about nutrition because they're so interested. They're like sponges they want to absorb that information to apply it to, whether it's a customer of theirs or from a horse owners' standpoint, how do they apply it to their horses? If anytime I typically get a request to get a speaking opportunity, if I've got a time in my schedule, I jump on it. That's how we share the information out of what nutrition is, really, it's a grass roots and maybe a little more detailed level than we can through a media campaign or advertising campaign or commercial because there's so many passionate people out there who really want to know the nuts and bolts of what goes into nutrition and it allows me to be the professor without working at a university. Definitely well, that's fantastic! It's so neat that you go in and you talk, and you really get to help people where they are which is just awesome. What does your horse life look like now, are you still riding, do you have horses? Yes, my wife is my trainer, so my wife runs a Quarter Horse training operation in central Oklahoma, is a member of AQHA professional horseman. She would probably tell you I'm her worst customer. Oh no! But yea I have a horse in the barn, but I don't ride as much as I should, but I continue to compete when I have time in amateur AQHA all-around competition, western pleasure, trail, showmanship, horsemanship, classes like that. We just got back last night, she has a customer competing at the AQHA World Show and so she's, we're into horses up to our eyeballs, which is where we want to be. Our 8-year-old daughter is beginning to show, we're in it anyway we can. Awesome! It's a family affair, that's so cool! Switching to the business side, what is your usual day like at

Nutrena? Every day is different I'll be real honest, it can range from long term planning around trying to uncover that next unmet need of horse owners of the next 5 to 10 years. What are they wanting and what are they not getting today, to be on the phone with veterinarian or an owner about specific product and nutrition questions about what we have? It's very wide ranging, you never know what any days going to bring, which is good, keeps you on your toes. I think a lot of my focus today in the role that I'm in as managing the equine business for Nutrena is what's next. You know, we'll talk about SafeChoice here, we've got SafeChoice in the market, what is next? How do we keep evolving, how to we keep bringing new exciting products to the market for horse owners that bring them real value, bring them real nutrition that changes their lives and changes the lives of their horses? That's what I spend a lot of my time focused on. Absolutely, and what do you enjoy the most would you say? you KNOW, outside of anytime I get to speak, it's that long term planning. Trying to uncover what's next. We do that a lot of different ways, going out talking to our sales teams, they're on the front lines, talking to horse owners every day from a wide variety of disciplines and regions around the country, getting feedback from them. Talking to consumers, to actually talk to horse owners where we can, whether that be a meeting and all that. Really the thing that brings me the greatest satisfaction in what my role is today is coming up with that next great innovation. Before my current position, I was in an innovation development, product development role, so to see that product development life cycle, how do we bring new viable products to the market that deliver true science and nutrition and value and results to the horses, is the most important to me. Yea and do you have any favorite products? I know we're going to talk about SafeChoice a little bit, but do you have any other favorites? You know, I don't know that I do, I mean I really, it's all of them, it's the portfolio, the breadth of the offering that excites me the most because if what my favorite could be personally isn't relevant for another horse owner. In my role, I have to manage and look at and love all of them. SafeChoice obviously is a huge product in the market, it grabs a lot of attention, but we've got a lot of other exciting things with our ProChoice line, what we do with Empower, our Triumph offering is really exciting and growing well. They're all exciting because they all serve a need either from an animal owner, from the owner's desire or perspective or the animal itself. You've got to love all of them! Definitely! I like how you said the portfolio, they all kind of work together which is really cool. They have to work together. One, I would say, 20 years, I've been in my working career for 20 years now, when I started 20 years ago you know there was a lot less offering out there, a lot less products out there. We tried to make one size fit all and the more we know about nutrition and the more we know about the desires and wants and needs of the horse owner, we know that doesn't work. They want to feel like they have something custom for their horse, you've got to build a portfolio of products to meet those needs. Yea, and a new product in that portfolio, like we mentioned earlier, is SafeChoice. Can you tell us a little bit about the process of launching SafeChoice and how Nutrena got to the formula for SafeChoice that they have today? Yea, we just relaunched SafeChoice in October. It's really an evolution of SafeChoice. The product has been in the market since 2003. This current re-launch that we just are in the middle of right now, it, I can trace it back, we probably really started looking at this two years ago. As you look at your products, and you look at what's next, what's new, what's changing, what needs, we really started to investigate what that next evolution for SafeChoice needed to be. Did some research, did some animal research around our amino acid profiles to help refine them. What do we need to tweak on them to produce better results that the horse owner could see? That and then we went out and actually talked to former people, people who had left SafeChoice, and current SafeChoice horse owners. And said, "what do you like and not like about SafeChoice?" Get it from the horse's mouth per say. Then we took all of that information to

design the products. So, we had an initial product design and then we had consumer research, we had animal research, all wrapped up into one. Once we designed the product, we did palpability and field trial testing of the final products to just verify and ensure what we designed delivered what we said it was going to. One time probably within this project we 10 people assigned to the core team in our business all working on different aspects of it and probably upwards of 50 probably had tentacles all working on bag design, photo shoots, product design, media campaign, you name it we really did it to take SafeChoice to the next level. Wow! It sounds like quite a process. it's really neat to hear that! You mentioned those amino acids. What are those 3 amino acids that SafeChoice guarantees and why are they so critical to horse owners? So, in the SafeChoice line we guarantee Lysine, Methionine, and Threonine. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein and I always describe amino acids as like the alphabet that makes up the words. Protein is the words and the sentences that we read, but it's made up of 26 letters. Amino acids are the letters that makeup proteins. There are certain amino acids that we call essential amino acids that are like the vowels in our English language; a, e, i, o and u. To my knowledge, no one's proven me wrong on this yet, you can't create a word in the English language without a vowel. I like that! I don't think you can, we're inventing a lot of new words today, and they say Websters dictionary is growing all the time, but you can't create a word without a vowel. Same principle applies when it comes to protein. You can't create good quality protein for a horse without essential amino acids. Lysine, Methionine, and Threonine are three of the 10 essential amino acids that the horse has to take in through the diet. there's about 20 in nature that are out there that they need nutritionally. They can create everything internally outside of those 10. The better we are at supplying those essential amino acids, the better muscle response, hair coat response, hoof quality response the horse will deliver. Whine we guarantee those amino acids on the label there guaranteed by law, there in there at that level, we're transparent with what we're supplying on those feeds and that's what we do with SafeChoice. Lysine is typically called the first limiting or the most important of the essential amino acids. That'd probably be like e in my vowel analogy, e's probably the most common vowel. Lysine's the most important, but methionine and threonine are also very critical. So, topline, haircoat, muscle all that stuff is driven by amino acids, by guaranteeing those levels right on the bag we're guaranteeing that to the consumer. They know what they are, and they have that peace of mind to deliver their results. Absolutely, and what other benefits do the ingredients in SafeChoice, what are those other benefits? Outside of the amino acids, which we've spent a lot of time and effort talking about with the SafeChoice line, if you go over SafeChoice's life span and history it really started the controlled starch looking at controlling starch in feed diets, listing the starch and sugar levels on the feed bag, SafeChoice really pioneered that back in 2003. No one else to my knowledge was doing that, saying here's what the maximum starch and sugar levels are in feed so if horse owners maybe had different metabolic conditions or hyperactivity or whatever, knew how to manage that, gave them the information to better manage their horses. We have pre and probiotics, yeast cultures, Lactobacillus, from a gut health and a digestibility standpoint. We had organic trace minerals, so our organic trace minerals are trace minerals like copper, zinc that are attached to an organic molecule, in this case their attached to an amino acid versus attached to a rock. So, they're more digestive to the horse. All of that packaged together omega-3 fatty acids, you know all of that packaged together creates what the SafeChoice line is. It's not one magic bullet in there that makes SafeChoice so good, it's the combination of all of those functional ingredients together in the SafeChoice package that delivers the results. Definitely! There are three options I noticed for feeding options for feeding SafeChoice. What are those differences and the three different audiences you could say for those three options? We added three new products to the

SafeChoice relaunch, before the relaunch there were 6 core products of SafeChoice; SafeChoice Original, Senior, Maintenance, Special Care and Mare and Foal, and also our SafeChoice Perform. With this relaunch we tweaked those 6 formulas, upgraded the amino acid profile, tweaked some starch and sugar levels to drive them down further, but we also launched these three new products; SafeChoice Senior LM which is a version of our SafeChoice Senior which is a very popular senior feed on the market, but we reduced the molasses levels, so that's what the LM stands for, lower molasses. For those horses and horse owners who wanted even lower sugar levels in their feeds. Its designed for that senior horse, with the lower sugar requirement in mind. Then we also launched SafeChoice Perform Textured and Mare and Foal Textured. The SafeChoice line prior to this relaunch was all pellet feeds, was all pellet, but there's a very good percentage of horse owners 20-30% based on the averages, that want to buy a textured feed. They weren't to see the grains, they want to see oats, they want to see corn. We added that to the SafeChoice line, but we still brought in that controlled starch and sugar levels so there's that textured feed offering but with controlled or managed starch and sugar levels because there wasn't really a lot in the marketplace where textured feeds were, they didn't, the competition hadn't gone there, they hadn't guaranteed and locked in those starch and sugar levels. We did that with the two SafeChoice textured products, Perform and Mare and Foal, and then now today, we have the Perform Pellet that we have before and now the Perform Textured. Into the two Perform products we added a marine source to calcite which is a marine sourced calcium that has enhanced buffering capacity for horses that may be dealing with various forms of gastric upset or ulcers. That buffer, when it hits the stomach, just buffers and helps manage any stomach acid that's occurring during that time. By adding this marine source calcite to our two Perform products and that really plays in the most into the performance horse where that's the biggest issue. We know ulcers are very high in the performance horse segment and not as high in those nonperforming horses, so we focused that technology on the performance horse where they're at biggest risk. Interesting and how should a horse owner feed SafeChoice for maximum results? Whether its SafeChoice or really any feed there's nothing magic that makes this different SafeChoice vs and other feed: follow feeding directions. It's probably one of the things that will, when we get a question, how much re you feeding and then follow those feeding directions. We designed those feeding directions to meet the nutritional needs of that horse so read that tag. There's, we've got it listed on our feed tag, also we have really simple example on the back of our bags for the entire SafeChoice line we break it down and to break it down and really practical for this type of horse feed this many pounds per day. probably split it up into twice a day feedings at least, also combine it with really good hay or at least know what your hay is. The foundation of any horses' diet is their hay. I work for a feed company and we're all about selling feed for a living, but the only purpose of a feed is to make up the nutrition that's not supplied by the horse's hay and forage source. so, that's the base, that's the foundation and then SafeChoice comes in and fills those gaps that they hays not filling. So, follow the feeding directions, feed twice a day, at least, and know and manage your hay source would be the three things I'd tell people whether it's SafeChoice or anything else we offer at Nutrena. That's great advice! And where can listeners find SafeChoice? SafeChoice itself the SafeChoice brand is stocked in over 4,000 retailers across the US. Tractor Supply to the local independent feed retailer, we have over 4,000 retailers that stock SafeChoice today and growing. So then how do I find out who's closest to me and that's where horse owners can go to nutrenaworld.com our website and right at the upper top right-hand corner there's text that says locate a retailer. Just type in your zip code and it'll bring up a map and show you the nearest retailers that we offer in your area and with 4,000 around the nation carrying SafeChoice I'd be hard surprised if it's not too far away from about every horse that's

out there. Absolutely! Are there any other feed options from Nutrena that listeners should be keeping an eye out for in the future? You know, there's always what we're going to come out with in the future, and I don't want to give away our future plans, but I will tell people to stay tuned. We've got, we're not done, we're not resting here, and we relaunched SafeChoice and we're not going away. We've got more exciting launches coming in the not-too-distant future. going back to that portfolio that we offer, SafeChoice will hit a lions share of the needs of the horses' out here. We've also got other products out there that really sit different specific maybe more niche type products or more specific needs of specific horses' like Pro Force, which is a higher fat, higher performance driven offering that we have also under Nutrena. Our Empower Topline Balance and Empower Boost Product line that our Empower Topline Balance is a concentrated source of proteins, vitamins and minerals to help balance, for those easy keepers where you want to top dress on something to add to the diet to help build those toplines. Empower Boost is a calorie source, it's a high fat nugget so if you have a horse that's underweight you can add Empower Boost to what you're already feeding, and that portfolio comes back into play. People need to stay tuned we've got some more exciting things to come here very shortly. We're just going to keep rolling out new stuff into the future. Awesome, well we look forward to it. Have your listeners, make sure to check out nutrenaworld.com and stay up to tune on what we're doing, follow us on social media, we're at an exciting time of the year with a lot of world caliber competitions going on with the AQHA World Show and the NFR and following into Winter Equestrian Festival, stay in touch with on social media, watch what our sponsored riders are doing, check out Nutrena World. We've got exciting things coming!

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