

AskAnnie_Episode50_Dr.Rambo_Tribute

Annie Kennedy: Hi everyone. This is the AskAnnie Podcast, horse girl reviews on products you use.

This episode is brought to you by Tribute Superior Equine Nutrition. It's only natural you want what's best for your horse. Wholesome Blends from Tribute Superior Equine Nutrition combines specially selected whole seeds and vegetables with a premium level of balanced nutrition crafted using the safest manufacturing practices. Wholesome Blends feeds are 100% soy free with no added iron for a buy three, get one free coupon. Visit tributeequinenutrition.com.

So, can you tell us a little bit about yourself, Dr. Rambo and your life prior to Tribute Equine Nutrition?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: Sure. So I grew up a horse, crazy little girl, much to the chagrin of my husband I have not outgrown it. So I had horses growing up and in fact started riding at 12. My dad's sisters went together and bought a package of riding lesson, and then my parents could never stop paying for them.

I'm sure they didn't really appreciate that gift all that much, but, uh, grew up riding really loved it was also really involved in 4H and FFA. And when it was time to go to college, I knew I didn't want to do any of the traditional horse jobs that I was aware of at the time trainer, farrier, vet. So I wound up majoring in animal science, just looking to kind of see what options were out there.

And then, um, worked for a ruminant nutritionist so beef, cattle, nutrition, professors, as an undergrad. At the same time, I was taking my nutrition courses and found that it was something that really made sense to me. So repro made zero sense to me. All those hormones couldn't understand that at all. But nutrition made sense to me.

And then I was kind of lucky enough to find this pathway where I took that topic that I found super interesting and pair it with my passion. That was horses. So kind of growing up, I didn't even know this was a job that you could have, but I feel very lucky that my pathway found it.

Annie Kennedy: And you mentioned your educational background.

Can you fill us in more on that and why you decided to go into nutrition?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: Sure. So really the decision to focus on nutrition came from that experience I had as an undergraduate, I did an undergraduate research project. I worked in a lab, so I did that at Texas A&M where I got my undergraduate. And then from there I did a master's at University of Kentucky and a PhD at University of Minnesota.

So I was able to see lots of parts of the country experience, a lot of different universities, which I think was a positive in my education. It built my network, as well as expose me to different ways to do things. I think if you fail in one place, you only get exposed to one thing. So I really appreciated that I was able to travel around and feel a lot during the education.

Yeah.

Annie Kennedy: Yeah, absolutely. And what is your horse life look like now?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: So I have three horses now. Um, I have them at home. We moved to Ohio when I started working for Tribute. Built a barn and I do some low level of venting. I kind of dipped my toes into that the last couple of years, it is challenging sometimes to balance, workload, and travel with my own riding. Um, I mostly ride for pleasure and compete just to have fun, but I guess this year has been a little different, no travel with COVID. So I've actually been home and able to ride quite a bit,

Annie Kennedy: That's kind of nice. What is your normal day look like at Tribute Equine Nutrition?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: It varies quite a bit, which is one thing that I really enjoy right now. I'm only in the office. I'm not traveling. Normally there'd be, you know, travel to horse expos, giving seminars, doing customer events for different dealers. Uh, right now that I'm in the office. It's not necessarily the same day to day, but there are some big rocks that I'm going to work on every week. So I'm very involved with our quality and production teams. We'll have ongoing meetings and improvement projects. I work very closely with them and I'm also our equine research coordinator. We're a member of cooperative research farms. It's a group of companies from across the world, really that pool our resources to do research. So my role in that is equine research director. So kind of collating all those interests from our different groups, working with coordinators to put together a research project protocol and then disseminate that information. So that's something that I do quite a bit of as well.

Annie Kennedy: You really wear a lot of different hats. Why is having a hand in multiple aspects of the company beneficial to the product itself?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: It gives me kind of a really good overall picture. So a decision that might make a lot of sense if you're only walking at one segment of the product development or launch process, Maybe doesn't make sense when you think about the entire process. So for example, we could have a fantastic idea for our products that would be really great for horses. The research would be fantastic, but if it's not the type of product that our production facility could make consistently with high quality that we can source the level of ingredients that are important to us, make sure the places we source them from are high degree of safety. Even if that idea is really fantastic. You need to be able to make the product at the end of the day. So working together through all those facets helps me really troubleshoot some of those things that may come up in the process when we're developing something new.

Annie Kennedy: Yeah. That, that makes total sense. What do you enjoy most about your role?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: My favorite thing about my role is that I get to help other horse owners, um, at the end of the day I'm first and foremost, a horse owner. So being able to indirectly or directly help horse owners, I do some troubleshooting on our more complicated nutrition cases, or just the idea that I'm having a hand in developing products that will help support

the health and wellness of a horse. It's something that's just really great to see that I can have that small or large impact on multiple horse owners.

Annie Kennedy: Yeah, absolutely. Do you have any favorite products?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: Hmm. That is almost the hardest question to answer. One of the reasons I decided to work for Tribute is looking at the equine line as a whole. It's a very strong portfolio of products, so there's not a single product in there from a nutrition or a safety perspective that I wouldn't feel comfortable recommending to another horse owner. Every single one of them are fantastic. They have different uses though. So let's say some that I tend to lean on pretty heavily would be Senior Sport, which is one of our newer launches. It's about a year and a half old. The high-fat senior feeds is super flexible. I use our ration balance or essential K a lot. Those are two products. I feed my own horses. And then another one that probably isn't as known or popular is one of our supplements called Advanced Pace. It's a probiotic and vitamin mineral paste that comes into too. And that's really helpful though, or growing horses that are having developmental issues, but also are mature horses. Maybe your stressy traveler, a horse who's overcoming an antibiotic treatment. Those are really helpful ways that we can help support the horse's health and wellness. So Advanced Pace that's on products that maybe not as many people know about compared to a lot of our fee.

Annie Kennedy: And you recently launched Wholesome Blends. Can you tell us a little bit about where this product came from?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: Yeah, the Wholesome Blends on the sub-line of Tribute . It is different, but comparable in the fact that it's still the same level of premium nutrition made in our single round manufacturing facility. But it does have some key differences from the rest of the line. So it's completely soy-free for every single possible source of soy horse ingredient. We don't use any of it. Um, there's no added iron and then it has been really interesting alternative ingredients. So we use things like sweet potatoes, which is a great fiber source. Peas for protein, black oil, sunflower seeds. Um, it's just a really interesting mix of ingredients. That are then all combined together to still provide what is in a traditional horse feeds, just coming at it from a different direction. And on top of that, it's just a really pretty feed. So I did a lot of the testing and I have to say, like, when I went to go feed my own horses, they're my Guinea pigs, like, wow, this makes you feel good to feed. Cause it's not a boring, plain pallets. So it's a really fun feed. I enjoyed working on it and it's exciting to see it getting out into the market.

Annie Kennedy: Yeah and you touched on this a little bit, but they are a hundred percent soy free. Why is that so important for owners?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: So we do get a lot of requests for a soy free feed. And part of that is concerns about soy allergies or sensitivities in our own horse. What relative amount of the population that is, we don't have the research to say, but there are some horse owners who very strongly feel their horses do better without soy. But creating a soy-free feed. Wasn't the easiest thing to do. So you're looking at the protein and soy is what horses respond to from an allergy perspective. So of course you wouldn't want to use soy bean meal, but then

soy hulls, even though that's mostly a fiber source that has protein molecules in it, and then even avoid wetting your soybean oil. So if you were to use a traditional really refined soy oil, there wouldn't be those proteins left. But we use an expeller pressed soybean oil. So it does have some of the solids left. It's a really great oil source, but in order to 100% eliminate those soy proteins from the diet, we had to use a different oil source as well, because if you're looking to avoid soy in the horse's diet, there's no sense in avoiding soybean meal, but using those other soy sources. So we actually had to, you know, do some changes to our manufacturing facility in order to make ourselves stable, make that 100% like, soy free feed a lot of dedication and infrastructure went into launching these feeds.

Annie Kennedy: Yeah. I'll say, and there are three options for Wholesome Blends, the balancer, performance, and senior, what makes these three products unique?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: So the idea with the line was to develop three feeds that could cover the majority of horse's needs. So in addition to being, soy free, we also want to, to cover kind of all your different life stages. So, um, even though it's senior in the name, the senior feeds a lower NFC high fiber feed that can be used through multiple life stages, very successfully even feed it to the growing horse and add a little bit of balancer to it, to kind of bring up that nutrition level to what we would need for growth and development. The balancer of course is our most flexible, right? For our easy keepers, those horses who maintain their weight on forage alone. And you just want to provide those additional nutrients, but it can also be used as a top dress. And maybe you have a horse who's offline. Maybe doesn't look as great as you would like. It's full of those strong muscle building amino acids. So we can add it to the other two. And then performance is really designed for that horse who has a high output of energy. So it's a little bit higher NFC is a moderate NFC in the low 20% range, but it's also 10% fat. So not necessarily for your horse who might be metabolic or not doing a hard working job that feeds design for horses who have a high output of energy and they need energy to replenish their glycogen stores in their muscles, maintain weight, and to be able to do their job.

Annie Kennedy: What type of horse would be the best candidate for each of these Wholesome Blend options?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: So they're really appropriate for any horse. So if you have a horse with a soy allergy, they're a great option. If you're already adding some of those alternative ingredients and not using a complete feed, this would be a way to get all of the nutrition in their diet or where it lacks and also provide some of those different ingredients that you might add separately. So ultimately as long as we choose a product that we can feed the minimum recommended feeding rate and it's appropriate for their life stage, Wholesome Blends could be used for all horses and that's something we're happy to help you figure out is, is that the right product? How much do I need to feed? Um, we have a great technical support team who that's, all they do is they help make recommendations to the horse owners to find the right program for their horses.

Annie Kennedy: Yeah, and really just helping horse owners know what's right. I really, I really appreciate that as a horse owner.

Dr. Nicole Rambo: Yeah, because you touched on it earlier. We have so many products and they're all great products and their own rights. But if you chose the wrong product for your horse's needs, you might walk away and say, Oh, that Tribute stuff is terrible. When in reality, we just didn't pick the right product. So we really want to help you find what's right for your horse in our line, whether that's Wholesome Blends or something else. That you have the best experience and we can support health, wellness, performance of your horse to the highest degree. But at the end of the day, as horse owners, that's all we want is happy, healthy horses that are supported in doing their job, whether that's hanging out, being a companion or a high level competition type job.

Annie Kennedy: Yeah. A hundred percent agree. Um, where can listeners find Wholesome Blends and other Tribute Equine Nutrition products?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: Yeah, so we have a large dealer network and the best way to find the one that is local to you is through our website, which is tributeequinenutrition.com. We have a dealer locator. If you do live in a part of the country where we don't have dealers at this time, we are available online through Chewy and Amazon. So it's kind of been really fun to see as e-commerce has evolved it's allowed us to reach a lot more customers that we just aren't able to reach through a traditional dealer today, and that's always a great option as well.

Annie Kennedy: Absolutely. And are there any options that Tribute Equine Nutrition, uh, that listeners should keep an eye out for?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: Ooh. Good question. So we do have some fun things in the pipeline, nothing that is quite close enough for me to talk about today. Um, but I would say the best place to learn about new products is through our social media. So we're very active on Facebook and Instagram. So if you follow us there, you'll learn a lot more about Wholesome Blends because that's certainly the focus today, but also that'd be the first place to learn about some new things we have coming in the pipeline for 2021.

Annie Kennedy: Awesome. Well, that's all the questions I have. Dr. Rambo. Was there anything else that you wanted to talk about?

Dr. Nicole Rambo: No, I think that covers it. Appreciate you having me on the podcast today. It was great to chat with you.

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