



November - 2009

La Stock Horse Assoc. finals set for November 14th and 15th

The Louisiana Stock Horse Assoc. has made plans to conduct the 2009 year end finals. The Finals will be held on November 14th and 15th, in Leesville, LA. To qualify for the Finals, a person must have competed in at least one LaSH show in 2009. The Finals will be totally separate from the competition for LaSH year end awards. Points won at the finals will not count toward year-end awards.

This year the Finals will be two separate shows. The LaSH board has decided to give awards at the finals based on the average winners for the two days of showing. Awards will be given for both Hi – point and class awards in all divisions. The awards for the 2009 Finals range from trophy stirrups for high point winners to vest for top individuals in each division. Class winners will receive Gist buckles and awards in the classes will vary from breast collars, winter blankets, bronc halters, gear bags, navajo pads, hay bags, clocks, boot jacks, and spur straps. There will be lots of nice awards given away to the average winners.

This will be a great opportunity to compete and win some nice awards, especially if you haven't been able to attend all the shows throughout the year and maybe are not eligible for year-end awards.

Those of you that are not LaSH members but are interested in finding out what LaSH is all about are invited to attend the finals. This may be an organization that you want to participate in next year.

For more information on LaSH or the finals, contact Judy Weisgerber at (337) 238-0193 or jweisgerber@huges.net, or go to the LA Stock Horse Association web site (www.louisianastockhorse.com).

“Proper feeding” – Important for Many Reasons

One of the greatest expenses of owning a horse is feed cost. This expense can be minimized by keeping your horse healthy, feeding a balanced ration and by purchasing feeds discriminately that meet the needs of the horse.

Feeding a horse is unique because of his unusual digestive system and his function as an athlete. This means he must be fed for health, longevity and athletic performance, in addition to normal growth and development. Therefore, it is essential that horseman understand the horse's digestive system, nutrient requirements and how to utilize the proper feedstuffs to develop a balanced ration to produce the desired results.

The Digestive System

The digestive system of the horse is very unique compared to other farm animals. The horse's stomach is quite small and will hold a maximum of 2 to 4 gallons, which is only about 8% of the horse's digestive tract. The small intestine makes up about 30% of the horse's digestive tract and is the major site of nutrient absorption. Approximately 65 to 70 percent of all nutrients are absorbed in the small intestines.

The next structure in the digestive system is the cecum, which is basically a fermentation vat responsible for breaking down roughages such as grass and hay and converting them into useful energy for the horse. Unfortunately, the cecum and the large intestine, known as the colon, make up almost 65% of the digestive tract but are responsible for only 25% of the nutrient absorption. The feed passes through the horse's stomach and small intestine in one or two hours. In a normal system of digestion, grain and highly digestible nutrients are utilized in the stomach and small intestine. Roughages and more coarse feeds such as hay and grass are broken down in the cecum and large intestine and utilized thereafter. This feature makes the horse digestive tract very unique to feed and dictates some differences in feeding management practices.

The small stomach and rapid rate of feed passage through the small intestine indicated that a horse must be fed relatively small amounts of feed on a regular basis. In nature, the horse is basically a continuous eater, and therefore the digestive system is not normally overloaded. The advantage of the rapid rate of passage through the stomach and small intestine is that within a couple of hours after feeding the horse can normally be ridden without danger of digestive problems. Unfortunately, if the horse is fed large amounts of grain, the undigested feed may move through the upper portion of the tract and overwhelm the lower gut. Grain that is passed into the cecum and large colon is fermented, which normally results in production of gas and gaseous colic. Therefore, horses are quite susceptible to digestive problems if large amounts of grain are fed, indicating the need for feeding small amounts of grain on a regular basis.

The lower gut, namely the cecum and colon, are designed for the utilization of forages, but are relatively inefficient in the digestive and absorptive process. As a result, it is difficult to feed horses on forage alone. Therefore, horses which have any additional requirement other than maintenance, such as performance horses, growing foals and lactating mares, will need additional high-quality feeds in order to meet their daily requirements. High quality hay and forage is also needed in order to achieve adequate utilization of feedstuffs fed to our horses.

Forages move through the digestive system slower than grains. Therefore, by feeding hay prior to grain, the grain portion of the ration can be slowed down through the digestive system and utilization of the grain is increased as well as reducing the potential for over-loading the hind gut. In order to utilize the digestive system of the horse properly, horsemen must feed high quality forages and small amounts of grain on a regular basis.

The Nutrient Requirement

The daily nutrient requirements of the horse are based on a critical need for protein, energy, vitamins, minerals and water, to enable the horse doing a specific job to achieve its genetic and physical capabilities. The daily requirements vary according to the age, size, use and reproduction status of the horse. Feed companies have given today's horseman an advantage. They have done extensive research to develop and provide rations that will meet the needs of horses in various stages of growth and use. These rations are balanced for protein, energy, minerals, and vitamins. This takes the guess work out of developing a ration for our horses. If fed properly and according to the label, these commercial feeds will meet the nutritional requirements of our horses.

Young growing horses consume small amounts of feed but require more protein, energy, calcium, and phosphorous than mature horses on a percentage basis. The Total Digestible Nutrients or energy needs of the horse increases as the horse becomes larger and as more work is added to his daily routine. As a result, hardworking horses require more energy but only slightly more protein than idle horses of the same age and size, as indicated by the increases in feed intake.

As a horse owner, it is important to know the nutritional requirements of your horse. As mentioned earlier, these requirements change with age and use of the horse. For the most part, as mentioned earlier, the feed companies have done large amounts of research to develop feeds that will meet the nutritional requirements of today's horse. As a horse owner, it is your responsibility to read the feed labels to feed the correct feed in the proper amounts to your horse. Remember that feed intake needs also change with the amount of activity that your horse is involved in. A horse being ridden daily will have a higher nutritional requirement than a horse that is ridden a couple of times each month.

It is also very important to give your horse adequate amount of time between feeding and riding. Riding a horse too soon after feeding could cause digestive problems for your horse. It is also very important to allow your horse an adequate cool down time before you feed as well. Feeding a horse while it is hot from work or immediately after work could cause major digestive problems such as colic.

One very important nutrient that is often overlooked or taken for granted is water. It is critical to provide your horse with plenty of clean fresh water daily. If watered in a bucket, the bucket should be emptied, cleaned and refilled at least twice daily. If a trough is used, it should be cleaned regularly and placed in the shade to prevent the summer sun from warming up the water and making it too hot to drink.

Dr. Clint Depew

LSU AgCenter Equine Specialist (Retired)

Don't Skip the Purchase Exam

Owning a horse can be a big investment in time, money, and emotion. Unfortunately, horses seldom come with a money back guarantee. That's why it is so important to investigate the horse's overall health and condition through a purchase exam conducted by an equine veterinarian. Whether you want a horse as a family pet, a pleasure mount, a breeding animal, or a high performance athlete, you stand the best chance of getting one that meets your needs by investing in a purchase exam.

Purchase examinations may vary, depending on the intended use of the horse and the veterinarian who is doing the examination. Deciding exactly what should be included in the purchase examination requires good communication between you and your veterinarian. The following guidelines from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) will help ensure a custom-tailored exam:

- Choose a veterinarian who is familiar with the breed, sport or use for which the horse is being purchased.
- Explain to your veterinarian your expectations and primary uses for the horse, including short- and long-term goals (e.g., showing, then breeding).
- Ask your veterinarian to outline the procedures that he or she feels should be included in the exam and why.
- Establish the costs for these procedures.
- Be present during the purchase exam. The seller or agent should also be present.
- Discuss with your veterinarian his or her findings in private.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions or request further information about your veterinarian's findings in private.

The veterinarian's job is neither to pass or fail an animal. Rather, it is to provide you with information regarding any existing medical problems and to discuss those problems with you so that you can make an informed purchase decision. Your veterinarian can advise you about the horse's current physical condition, but he or she cannot predict the future. The decision to buy is yours alone to make. But your equine veterinarian can be a valuable partner in the process of providing you with objective, health-related information.

For more information about purchase exams, ask your equine veterinarian for "Purchase Exams: A Sound Economic Investment," a brochure provided by the AAEP in conjunction with Education Partner Bayer Animal Health. Additional information can be found on the AAEP's horse health Web site, www.myHorseMatters.com.

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Horse Tips

- **Ten Commandments of Horse Safety**

1. **Buy or ride a safe horse**
2. **Don't be over mounted (too spirited or large)**
3. **Know your horse**
4. **Don't surprise your horse**
5. **Check your tack**
6. **Small children must be watched around horses**
7. **Tie your horse with care**
8. **Know trailer safety**
9. **Don't crowd others**
10. **No clowning around**

- **Horse teeth**

1. **Young Horses – 24 temporary teeth**
2. **Mares 36 – 38 mature teeth**
3. **Stallions – 40 – 42 mature teeth**

- **If you have a horse that is prone to colic, you might consider the following:**

- ✓ **Smaller meals at equal intervals**
- ✓ **Adequate digestible fiber**
- ✓ **Good quality chopped hay**
- ✓ **Feed hay off the ground**
- ✓ **Guaranteed fresh water**
- ✓ **Increased free exercise**

**Cleve Weisgerber
Regional Equine Agent
LSU AgCenter**

