

Feeds and Safety in Horse Riding Schools

10 June, 1999

Commissioner

Queensland Industrial Relations Commission

GPO Box 373

BRISBANE QLD 4001

Attention: Mr A.L. Bloomfield

Dear Sir,

re: Board of Inquiry - Horse Riding Schools

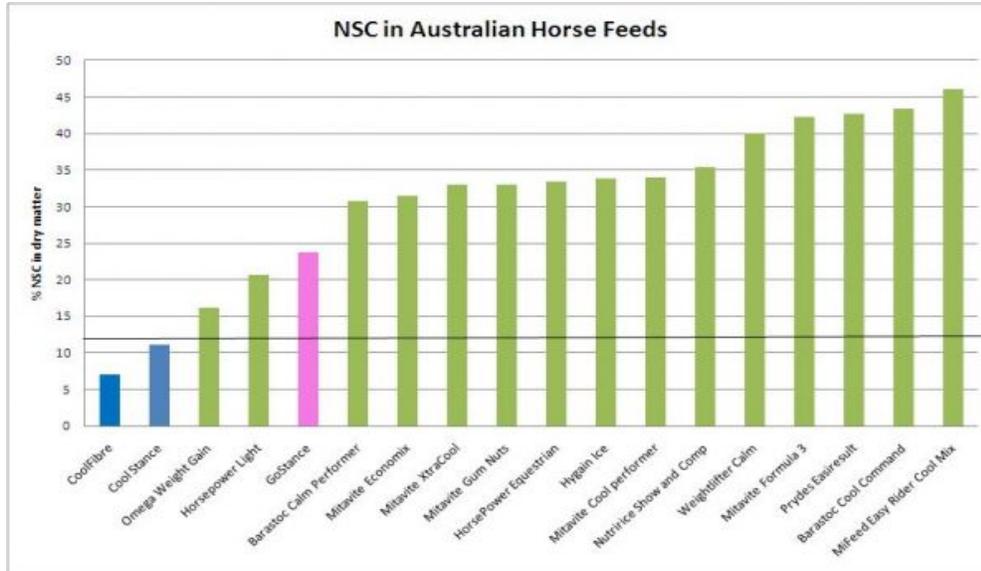
Public health and safety issues in horse riding will ultimately depend on the interaction between three unrelated brains under a variety of circumstances, i.e. the brain of the riding instructor, the pupil, and the horse.

The riding instructor can communicate directly with the pupil, however under many circumstances the pupil does not have the necessary skills to effectively communicate with the horse. This often results in accidents because the rider does not have sufficient training or experience to control the unpredictable actions of the horse.

The behavior of horses is in most cases diet related. Most people know that feeding grain to horses causes them to have more energy and increase performance, i.e. "feel their oats" and "heat up". The sugar and starch content in a diet is referred as the Non Structural Carbohydrate (NSC). This is the same as the GI content referred to in human nutrition. There is now considerable information in the scientific press supporting the view that high NSC diets (>11%) can cause horses to "heat up" and become excitable and often unmanageable. The effect of feeding high NSC diets is often displayed clinically as metabolic disorders including obesity, insulin resistance, tying up, lameness and laminitis. The effect of high NSC diets is exacerbated when the level of work or exercise is reduced, which means that the horse is unable to burn off the additional energy.

Most horse feeds traditionally contain high levels of NSC, with some roughage. Attached is the NSC of a range of Australian horse feeds, as analyzed by Dairy One in the USA. This shows that the NSC level is as high as 45% in some feeds. These feeds can be fed to horses in active work, however caution must be taken when horses are overfed and underworked.

For more information or to order CoolStance/PowerStance, please
call 803-647-1200 or e-mail Claudia@stanceglobal.com



New developments in equine nutrition have identified the role of high energy, oil based feeds to replace grains. These products such as the natural plant product CoolStance copra meal contain adequate levels of protein, amino acids, energy in the

form of oil, and minimal NSC (<11%). These feeds are referred to as sources of Cool Energy, ie they do not cause the horse to “heat up” or become temperamental.

In my view as a professional nutritionist, with over twenty years’ experience in all aspects of the horse industry, that a major contributing factor to health and safety issues in the riding industry relates to a poor knowledge of the interaction between nutrition and work of horses. Most horses are overfed with high NSC diets, they are often underworked, and so the overconsumption of sugar and starch creates metabolic byproducts such as lactate which predisposes the horse to temperament changes. These animals are unsuitable for riding schools in such an excitable state. The effect of replacing grain in the diet is to reduce the total NSC intake, and cause a calming effect on the horse.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that a prerequisite in the horse riding school industry is accreditation of the school and the instructors. This would be achieved by the industry establishing a Code of Practice, which would address issues such as criteria for selection of horses and instructors, and feeding practices.
- It is recommended that the Code of Practice provide for training programs into equine nutrition
- The horse industry is unlike all other animal feeding industries. The horse industry abounds with secret concoctions and potions for increasing performance. Fads are the norm, and there is often no common base from which the average person can judge the suitability of a feedstuff.. It is recommended that all horse feeds be labelled to provide information about the NSC content, and the likely effects of the product on horse temperament.

It is our experience that replacing starch and sugar in horse diets with low NSC, oil based feeds has been the main factor in changing horse behavioral patterns, and making them more tractable. We believe that horses used in riding schools should not be given high NSC diets, and that the energy intake in the diets be maintained by replacing grains with high oil based plant meals such as CoolStance copra meal. This will provide one means of having some control over the most unpredictable factor in the trio - the horse.

For more information or to order CoolStance, please call 803-647-1200 or e-mail Claudia@stanceglobal.com