



## **TREATING ARTHRITIS NATURALLY**

Equine degenerative joint disease (arthritis) is the most common lameness problem in horses and while it is mostly an old age disease, arthritis can strike at any age.

As the president of Save a Horse Australia Horse Rescue and Sanctuary, I have seen and treated many horses of all ages that have advanced stages of arthritis and while I would like to save every life, I have also had to euthanize many horses that were too advanced to treat and their pain couldn't be managed. While arthritis cannot be cured, preventive measures can be used and if caught early, pain can easily be managed so that the horse can live out its days pain free.

### ***What is the process of Arthritis?***

Arthritis is a painful degenerative joint disease that can affect horses of all ages but is seen mostly in senior horses. It is the result of chronic joint inflammation which is the body's natural way of fixing a problem. The problem normally starts off as an infection, injury or tissue damage which causes chemicals from the injured tissues to stimulate pain receptors, which then start an impulse to the central nervous system. The brain then processes the impulse and establishes that there is a problem in that area so it sends impulses to begin the immune response. Inflammation cells, which are white blood cells, move into the area and while they do a great job at killing bacteria and eating damaged tissue they also release chemicals into the surrounding tissue that actually destroy it.

This is where arthritis can form and this is why inflammation is so destructive and why as horse owners it's so important to do everything we can to stop it. Once the inflammation starts and over a period of time the self feeding cycle results in joint cartilage deterioration, painful joint capsule thickening and the breakdown of joint fluid, which causes the body to attempt to heal the damage by developing scar tissue and calcifying bones to decrease flexibility and over all joint function.

The whole process is painful, especially as the cartilage is being destroyed and underlying bone is left unprotected. The chemical released by inflammation simulates pain which is the body's way of stopping the horse from using damaged tissue. This works well for cuts or non arthritic related lameness but unfortunately in the case of arthritis, all this does is cause further breakdown of the joint due to decreased circulation from inactivity. Arthritis is usually more painful in the beginning with pain being less intense after the joint has calcified causing less flexion.

### ***Arthritis Management***

There are a number of different ways you can prevent and manage inflammation and support the structure of the joint. These include: Proper trimming/shoeing, exercise, balanced diet, joint injections, equissage and responsible breeding. However in this article

I will be focusing on supplements and natural herbs, which when used in conjunction with a balanced diet, trimming, equissage and an exercise program, work extremely well. I have never once used joint injections on any rescue horse and find that with proper management the natural supplements have worked well enough to keep each horse paddock sound and pain free.

### ***Supplements Used for Treating and Managing Equine Arthritis***

*Devils Claw* – Has antiphlogistic and analgesic effects (Inflammation reducing and pain relieving). It is a natural anti-inflammatory which can be used instead of Bute to help reduce inflammation and pain. I give each horse 2 tablespoons daily.

*Celery Seeds* – These also have high anti-inflammatory properties and I give each horse 1 tablespoon each day.

*Chamomile Flower* – Is a great all purpose herb which helps with tummy upsets, ulcers, loss of appetite and helps heal common colds, wounds and burns. It is also a great herb for arthritis with anti-inflammatory and pain relieving properties. I feed each horse 1 cup daily.

*Meadowsweet* – This herb is very much like Chamomile in that it is great for colds and healing the body. It also has some analgesic properties so is great for arthritic horses. I feed ½ cup to each horse daily.

*Turmeric* – This would have to be one of the best herbs for treating arthritis. It has potent anti-inflammatory properties that also exert beneficial effects on cartilage metabolism. This herb is a must when treating arthritis. I feed 1 tablespoon to each horse daily.

*Green Lipped Muscle Powder* – This supplement assists with the support of arthritis and is a great alternative to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. It works by supplying the body with the necessary building blocks to aid in the repair of cartilage, fluids and connective tissues by helping lubricate and alleviate the symptoms of sore and stiff joints. I feed each horse 2 tablespoons daily.

*MSM & Glucosamine* - Best supplemented together, have a number of different uses but are mainly used together to aid in preventing and maintaining horses with arthritis. I feed each horse 2 tablespoons of MSM and 1 tablespoon of Glucosamine daily.

*Rosehip Vital* - Is another great general purpose herb, high in vitamin C and used to help improve the horse's immune system and assist with recovery from trauma and tissue repair. It is amazing for arthritis. I feed 2 tablespoons to each horse daily.

*Hawthorn Berry* – This herb is excellent for increasing circulation which is extremely important for horses with arthritis. I feed each horse 1 tablespoon daily.

*HyGain Hyaglyde* - Hyaluronic Acid is a component of synovial fluid in the joint capsule and in the supporting tissues around the joint. In fact Hyaluronic Acid is abundant in all the soft-tissue cells of the body. In the joint, Hyaluronic Acid is responsible for directly lubricating the joint by making synovial fluid more viscous and slippery, providing cushion

and protection against friction. Hygalyde's main ingredient is Hyaluronic Acid, and this supplement is extremely successful in all horses we have used it on.

*4Cyte* – Veterinarian designed and endorsed supplement which helps with cartilage regeneration, prevents joint degradation and promotes healthy cartilage. It is also a proven anti-inflammatory.

The herbs and supplements listed above are what I use to treat equine arthritis. It's important to consult your vet to get a proper diagnosis and to establish a treatment that is best for your horse. The herbal treatment can be used in conjunction with any arthritis treatment that your vet has provided and this herbal plan can also be used on horses to help prevent and maintain the progress of equine arthritis.

You can't completely prevent or cure the disease but you can help your horse be comfortable and with the right treatment you can slow the process down.

Please note that I am not a professional herbalist and this information is based on what has worked for the many horses I have had come through the Sanctuary with arthritis.

This article is not a substitute for professional veterinarian advice.

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