

SAFEGUARDING THE DIGESTIVE HEALTH OF COMPETITION HORSES DURING WINTER

Dressage rider Lara Dyson knows how important a healthy digestive system is to the happiness and performance of her horses.

Lara, who is a brand ambassador for The Lifeforce Range from Altech works hard to ensure the routine on her yard is designed to get the most from her horses while maintaining their health and well-being.

The lifestyle of a competition horse can have a negative impact on this delicate system, especially during winter when they are more likely to be confined to the stable for longer periods.

It is estimated that 60–80% of competition horses suffer from gastric ulcers, due to the high concentrate diet needed to fulfil their energy requirements and also the stress induced by their training schedules, travelling and limited hours grazing.

A combination of a high starch diet and less than adequate fibre can lead to disruption of normal hind gut function reducing the ability of the hindgut to maintain a near-neutral pH.

When horses are asked to perform, there is increased stress on the gut meaning appropriate diets and feeding management is even more crucial.

Here we look at how Lara safeguards the digestive health of her horses during the winter months.

The feeding routine of all the horses at Cyden Dressage is reviewed every three months with Lara checking their weight and condition and adjusting the diet accordingly.

During the winter months when the grazing quality is poor and the horses are stabled for longer they are fed four small meals a day at 7, 11, 4 and 8pm, this ensures they do not suffer from starch overload. Horses can digest very little starch at any one time and the small intestine struggles to deal with concentrate rations containing more than 3-4g (possibly less) of starch per kilogram of body weight per meal.

All the horses are fed ad lib hay, as providing adequate forage is the golden rule for digestive health, and should make up 60% of the horses total rations.

Turnout is vital to reducing stress levels. "All horses must be allowed time to just be a horse and this means getting them out of the stable. We try to turn the horses out for two to four hours a day and if the fields are ever water-logged during winter, the horses get what I call 'loose time' in the arena, where they even get to play with a large gym ball," explained Lara.

"They also get a play ball in their stable containing high fibre nuggets to help relieve the boredom that is sometimes inevitable in winter when they are in their stables for longer than I would like."

Consideration should be given to the horses' workload. If their energy requirements are reduced because the exercise routine changes due to bad weather or a lighter competition schedule, alter the

diet reducing the quantity of concentrate feed – always remember fibre first!

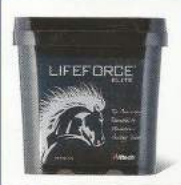


Lifeforce brand ambassador Lara Dyson © Cyden Dressage, Moorland

Lifeforce Elite

Lifeforce Elite from Altech is specially designed for competition horses and those faced with stressful situations. It supports a healthy immune system, increases the availability of antioxidants and creates a healthy digestive environment.

Backed by more than 30 years of Altech's scientifically proven, fully traceable technologies, Lifeforce Elite contains cutting edge ingredients that fully comply with competition standards, where consistency and safety are a top priority.



Each supplement is available in a 5kg tub, which provides a three-month supply and prices start at £120.



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