



FEED FOR THOUGHT

OIL SUPPLEMENTATION WHAT ABOUT IT?

A common practice in the sport horse industry that has recently come into favor has been to supplement one's horse with oil. People will use it for a variety of reasons, such as adding weight to a hard keeper, to encourage a glossy coat, to give "cool" energy, or to help treat arthritis. It may even help fertility in mares and stallions. But which oil and form should one use? Something cheap and plentiful like corn oil or soybean oil? Or maybe a whole ingredient, like black oil sunflower seeds? Flaxseeds in variety of forms have become the darling of the horse world, as well.

The reality is that there really has not been a plentiful amount of investigation done among the equine sciences to examine these questions and much of the information we do have has been extrapolated from other species. Despite this, there is still valuable information available to help horse owner's make an informed decision for their equine partners.

Many of the perceived benefits of supplementing oil, such as improvements in cardiac performance and insulin sensitivity, have only been linked high omega-3 fatty acid values and not crude fat values (Simopoulos, 1991). Horses would naturally find omega-3 fatty acids in the grass and seeds they would find while foraging in open rangeland. Some supplemental sources of omega-3 fatty acids used today, listed in increasing quality, are soybeans, canola oil, flaxseed, and fish oil (USDA, 2009). If your horse does not have access to fresh green grass on a regular basis, then you should be supplementing their diet with omega-3 fatty acids.

The most commonly fed oil in the horse industry, corn oil, is actually very low in omega-3 fatty acids and quite inflammatory, meaning that it can potentially aggravate any existing conditions, such as arthritis or tendonitis, that your horse might have. While your horse's coat may be shiny, his or her long-time soundness and

ability to perform may begin to suffer. As with many aspects of equine nutrition, oil supplementation works best when one goes with a small amount of a high quality, omega-3 rich oil rather than buying a low quality oil in bulk. Make the fat content of your horse's diet count!

Fish oil has the best nutritional profile for the horse due to its very high omega-3 fatty acid content and overall anti-inflammatory effects. A recent study done by the University of Kentucky, though, showed that the benefits of fish oil for the exercising horse (O'Connor et al., 2004). Among the horses they tests, the horses consuming fish oil had lower heart rates during exercise, had better circulation, had more efficient muscle function, and a significantly improved recovery time when compared to those fed corn oil. Historically, fish oil has been avoided in the equine industry primarily due to palatability which is understandable with the strong odor long associated with all fish products. What Cavalor has done is blended canola oil, flaxseed oil, soy oil and fish oil to create a combination of the best oils for your horse into a single product called Cavalor® Oilmega to capitalize on the benefits of each while minimizing the issue with palatability.

C. I. O'Connor, L. M. Lawrence, A. C. St. Lawrence, K. M. Janicki, L. K. Warren, and S. Hayes. 2004. The effect of dietary fish oil supplementation on exercising horses. *J. Anim. Sci.* 82:2978-2984. Simopoulos, A. P. 1991. Omega-3 fatty acids in health and diseases and in growth and development. *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 54:438-463. United States Department of Agriculture: Agricultural Research Service. 2009. Dietary Supplements. Ingredient Database. Compiled by Nutrient Data Laboratory.