

# EQUINE GASTROINTESTINAL ULCERS

## *Hindgut Ulcers*

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# Incidence of Hindgut Ulcers



- They are more common than we think
- In a retrospective necroscopic study of 545 horses, 44% of non-performance and 63% of performance horses had colonic ulcers (Pellegrini's study, 2005)
- More research has been done to understand gastric ulcers than colonic ulcers

# The complexities of Diagnosis of Hindgut Ulcers



- Various names: Colonic Ulcers, Right Dorsal Colitis or RDC, etc... depending of the location
- Gastrosocopy cannot diagnose Hindgut Ulceration
- However, negative gastrosocopy, in the face of ulcer signs and behavior, may lead to a presumptive diagnosis of colonic ulcers
- Treatment with Gastric Ulcer medications will have no effect on colonic ulcers and its failure can definitely be a sign that the horse has hindgut ulcers
- The risk for colonic ulcers is even greater in performance horses and those already suffering from gastric ulcers.

# Presumptive Diagnosis



- Acupuncture “indicator points” may also be helpful in arriving at a presumptive diagnosis of Ulcerative Colitis (see demonstration video)
- Colonic Ulcers are associated with PG-2 (Prostaglandin) inhibition by the administration of NSAID drugs or by the stress related production of endogenous corticosteroids
- Signs can include mild or intermittent colic, lethargy, poor appetite
- In most severe forms, complete anorexia, fever and diarrhea may be accompanied by dehydration, ventral edema and weight loss

# Presumptive Diagnosis



- Common symptoms:

Girthiness

Sensitivity along the flanks, especially right side

“Tucked up” belly

Poor hair coat, especially on the abdomen

Diarrhea

Difficulty bending or collecting

Fecal pH of 6.5 or less

# Diagnosis



- Another diagnostic tool is to perform an abdominal ultrasound of the right dorsal colon. The examination might show thickening of the colon wall. Normal is <math><0.4\text{cm}</math>.
- The presence of blood in the manure may be helpful as an ancillary diagnostic test for colonic ulcers. Ref: Succeed Fecal Blood Test ([www.succeedfbt.com](http://www.succeedfbt.com))

# Assess the severity of intestinal problems



- Assess whether the horse is dealing with: acidosis, gastric ulcers, intestinal inflammation, hind gut ulcers, or true leaky gut syndrome?
- Leaky gut syndrome being the most serious and debilitating. It might lead to chronic allergies generally associated with skin issues: hives, swelling, scratches, poor parasite resistance, etc

# Foregut or Hindgut?



- If there is ulceration, determine whether it is in the foregut (stomach) or the hindgut (colon). If you have already treated with one full course of Omeprazole, and the symptoms are back, suspect Hindgut Ulcers.
- Some of the nutritional management will differ if you are treating foregut, hindgut ulcers or true leaky gut syndrome
- However, reducing environmental stress is essential for dealing with all digestive tract issues.



# Hindgut Ulcers



- The healing of the Hindgut involves emptying the colon, to calm down inflammation. Hindgut needs to be allowed to “rest”
- By reducing grain concentrates or even eliminate grain ration for about three weeks, it will reduce inflammation in the colon
- The goal is to decrease gut fill and bulk in the diet
- The switch to the new diet will still need to be done gradually to allow the intestinal tract to adjust to the changes

# Hindgut Ulcers



- Limit the amount of hay; substitute for soaked hay cubes (timothy/alfalfa) every 2 hours if needed
- Hay and Fibrous feeds (beet pulp, hay cubes and bran) stay three times as long as the starchy feeds
- Access to adequate pasture or hand graze several times a day
- Any fasting greater than 4 hours will create excessive stress on the gastrointestinal tract

# Hindgut Ulcers



- Use small hole hay nets and/or slow feeders day **AND** night.
- Discontinue or avoid the use of NSAIDs especially Bute or Banamine
- Maintain this program for a very minimum of 30 days

# Hindgut Ulcers



- If you are dealing with chronic hindgut ulcers or what we could associate with true leaky gut syndrome, know that you need to address all of the causative factors
- You need to restore the balance in the gut microbiome; it will take time
- Avoid GMO products and favor organic feeds and hay, check water quality
- Make sure that the horse lives in a toxic free environment

# Hindgut Ulcers



- If you want to use conventional medications, start with Sucralfate. Also consider Egusin SLH, Kombat Boots, EquiShure and/or some of the other “gut conditioners” we described in the previous section
- Add additional Omega 3, like Flax Seed. Other fat sources can be added like stabilized rice bran, fish oil (recommended by Dr Bill Vandergrift, from Equivision)
- Probiotics along with Prebiotics
- Refer to your veterinarian or nutritionist to help you choose the right product for your horse

# Hindgut Ulcers - Special program



- Dr Bill Vandergrift from EquiVision has developed a nutritional program specifically tailored to horses with hindgut ulcers
- His objective is to:
  - Reset the fermentation in the hindgut
  - Balance the pH
  - Re-establish a normal intestinal immune response
  - Provide an anti-inflammatory environment for the intestine

# Hindgut Ulcers - Equivision



- Hindgut Health program developed by [www.equivision.com](http://www.equivision.com)

# Hindgut Ulcers - Equivision



- His program consists of a very scheduled nutritional supplementation of products over 21 days
- One is designed to restore and support gut health. It is a blend of probiotics, prebiotics, mannaoligosaccharides, along with yeast cultures, beta-glucans and anti-oxidants
- The other one is a fatty acid supplement carefully balanced to fight inflammatory activity



# Additional Help with Hindgut Ulcers

## UlcerAide TH



- A combination of potent phytonutrients known for their beneficial influence on the digestive system
- Contains Licorice and Marshmallow Root Powders, Slippery Elm, Peppermint Leaf, Oat Straw, Calendula and Cleavers, all human grade ingredients
- Formulated to decrease acid production, coat the stomach lining, and help with getting rid of the harmful bacteria
- [www.wintreats.org](http://www.wintreats.org) (UlcerAideTH & DTP)

# Additional Help with Hindgut Ulcers

## DTP: Digestive Therapy Packets

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- A combination of potent phytonutrients known for their beneficial influence on the digestive system
- Contains Licorice, Marshmallow and Slippery Elm Root Powders, Charcoal Powder, a proprietary blend of beneficial bacteria, as well as some L-Glutamine Aloe Vera Leaf gel and other minerals and food based nutritional compounds
- Designed to normalize pH, reduce inflammation in the digestive system and restore beneficial bacteria in the gut

# Additional Help with Hindgut Ulcers

## DTP & *UlcerAide* TH



- Some of our clients have had great success with using these products and were able to stop the vicious cycle of using Omeprazole
- The 10 day treatment (DTP) with the original product is quite costly but if it is used in lieu of Omeprazole, it is still cheaper. It is not meant as a band aid for a symptom but as a healing gut therapy

# Hindgut Ulcers - Conclusions

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- Colonic Ulcers are definitely a nutritional problem
- Analyze carefully what you feed your horse and make sure that he has forage all the time
- Balance the forage with Trace Minerals or Supplements
- Replenish friendly bacteria in the gut and aim to rebalance the microbiome

***Healing the gut takes time!***