Equine Performance Supplements: Safe or Not

What are equine performance supplements?
Equine performance supplements are any aid that enhances the performance or work ability of a horse. These supplements can also alleviate medical conditions and improve cosmetic factors. Supplements can come in powder and liquid forms. Also, many of the supplements in today’s market are herbal. They are fed with feed and as a ratio to the weight of the horse or amount of feed.

Do supplements work?
Yes. Supplements can assist with many different issues such as:
- Breathing issues
- Hoof problems
- Dull coats
- Joint pain
- Lack of energy
- Digestive issues

Adding certain fatty acids to a horse’s diet has been proven to lengthen the horse’s trot stride length. Each supplement is specialized for a specific issue. Testing shows that when the proper dosage is administered supplements do work. Supplements are a simple way to insure a horse is obtaining the correct nutrients needed for its level of performance.

What are the dangers of using supplements?
Unlike human supplements, there is limited regulation over equine supplements. This can cause problems such as:
- Incorrect levels of needed ingredient
- Mislabeled packaging
- Misleading advertisement
- Variations of supplements

The variations cause the supplement to be not as effective as it would if the proper levels of ingredients were in the supplement.

There is also a high risk in overloading a horse on vitamins and minerals contained in supplements. Most horses can obtain their vitamin and mineral requirements within their daily diet. When a horse receives an excess of a vitamin or mineral it can have adverse effects. For example, Vitamin B1 can be used to increase a horse’s energy, when given in excess the horse can become over energized and even begin to have breathing problems. Overloading can cause other health issues that require veterinary care.

Are supplements safe to use?
Supplements should be looked at like a drug. They should be used in moderation and only when needed. Before using a supplement, a veterinarian or equine nutritionist should be consulted.

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Supplements are safe as long as the proper dosage is administered and the horse is monitored for negative side effects. The easiest way to ensure the horse’s safety is by following these easy steps:

1. Consult with a veterinarian or nutritionist about the horse’s health issues.
2. Conduct research over the variety of supplements on the market.
3. Test the supplement to ensure it is effective.
4. Monitor the horse for negative side effects while it is on the supplement.
5. At any signs of negative side effects stop use of the supplement.

Conclusion

Supplements can be beneficial in alleviating health conditions, improving performance, and improving cosmetic issues. However, using supplements can have risks that could lead to more serious health problems. Not all horses need to be given supplements to improve their performance or health. A healthy horse should be able to receive its daily nutrients from its feed and roughages. Knowing the levels of nutrients in the horse’s feed will aid in knowing which nutrients the horse could be lacking. This will also assist in preventing overloading the horse on specific nutrients. When used properly, supplements can be safe and effective.

References


