EQUINE PRODUCERS NEED PRODUCER FRIENDLY SUPPLEMENT

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS – Equine producers have begun using increasing amounts of equine performance supplements because of the positive side effects; however, many consumers are not aware of the dangers that can arise from supplement use.

Many of the hazards arise because of the lack of regulations during the manufacturing process. Unlike human supplements, equine performance supplements do not have regulations regarding the manufacturing and packaging process. Williams said, “Most herbs and functional foods have not been scientifically tested.”

The lack of regulations allows for variations in quality. A study done over glucosamine supplements and the effect over joint problems, done by done by Oke, Aghazadeh-Habashi, Weese, and Jamali, results showed a variation of quality of product. Out of the 23 supplements tested nine lacked the correct amounts of glucosamine needed for the supplement to be effective. If there had been regulations in place, this variation of product would not have happened.

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This is dangerous when equine owners begin feeding excess levels of the supplement in hopes of gaining the desired result. Horses are like humans in the way of being able to obtain too much of a nutrient. Pascoe says horses in different environments and of different ages need different levels of nutrients. This concept should be taken into consideration when feeding any form of supplementation.

The best way to prevent overloading a horse on nutrients from feeding supplements is to consult a veterinarian or nutritionist before starting a supplement, knowing the nutrition facts of the feed currently being fed to the horse, and monitoring the horse for any negative side effects. Geor said, “It is the role of the veterinarian and/or nutritionist to critically evaluate marketing claims regarding a given supplement.”

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