

# Evaluate Those Equine Supplements

Look closely, and they might not be needed

By Natalie Voss

**I**t seems these days that there's a supplement for every ailment, and for every species. While our own cupboards are overflowing with vitamins and herbal extracts, you almost can't escape the ads in print or online for supplements for your horse.

Nearly every horse owner has some particular product they swear by, and sometimes more than one. But how do you filter out the best from "the rest" when there are so many products on the market?

Maybe some wholesome horse treats would suffice



Here's how to evaluate your supplements



### Who oversees?

Unlike drugs, the production of supplements (both human and equine) is not overseen by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

While a new prescription or over-the-counter drug has to go through a rigorous, federally-mandated testing process to make sure it is both safe and effective, supplements do not.

Makers of equine supplements may choose to do independent, blind testing of either the key ingredients in their product or their complete product to make sure they work...or they may test by themselves without such controls to ensure good quality data.

### Supplement makers may choose not to test efficacy at all.

Makers of supplements are also not subject to the same kind of requirements as drug makers on the sourcing for their ingredients. That means they could have strict standards about the purity and safety of their product's ingredients—or, they might not.

Supplement companies are not, per FDA definitions, permitted to market their product as though it can be completely responsible for curing or totally preventing a diagnosable disease.

If you see a supplement that is being marketed that way (as a cure for an illness), that should raise a red flag. A responsible company should view a supplement as something that enhances a horse's diet or health regime, not something that replaces the need for actual medical care.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

### Ask the tough questions

So, how can you decide whether to buy that supplement you've been considering?

■ Make sure it's something your horse actually needs. Horses getting an appropriate amount of a complete feed (grain) will probably not be short of key amino acids, vitamins, and minerals. Consult an equine nutritionist to help with this. Some nutritionists who work for feed mills can also review your horse's feeding program with you to see if there are any deficiencies. They will want to know the content and quality of your horse's hay.

■ Your veterinarian should also be one of your first calls. They can review the product in light of your horse's medical history, since it could impact any medical treatments the horse may need.

■ Take a look at the product packaging. You should be able to easily locate a list of ingredients, along with amounts. If you can't, then you really have no way to know what's in it – and that is cause for concern.

■ Ask questions of the supplement producer. They should also be able to point you to research regarding the effectiveness of those active ingredients. Look for published, academic research studies as the gold standard.

### About the author:

Natalie Voss is a freelance writer and editor based in Lexington, Ky. Along with freelancing, Natalie is a features writer for the *Paulick Report*, a source of Thoroughbred horse racing news. When she isn't writing, Natalie spends her time riding and training her mare, Jitterbug.



# LEHMAN'S

FOR A SIMPLER LIFE

## FOR A SIMPLER LIFE

Lehman's is your source for everything you need to live the simpler life. Whether you live without electricity, are preparing for a power outage, or want to learn a new skill, we can help.

» LEHMANS.COM «  
800.438.5346

On the Square in Kidron, OH  
Open every day except Sunday



### LET'S BE SOCIAL

@lehmanshardware

