

Hints from Members

Collected from correspondence by Lynda Hall, Jan 2007

LICE

A number of people vouch for the efficacy of sulphur powder in helping to prevent lice infestation, both as a feed supplement and topical treatment. However it seems that when lice already have a stronghold (as was the case with my boy Rohan) chemical treatment is also necessary.

I was recommended to use

Nucidol as a spray on treatment

Joseph Lyddy block. Which is a block of compressed insecticidal powder, rubbed into the coat and skin.

I have to say that for ease of use the Lyddy block was great. The donkeys seemed to enjoy the rub and the action effectively applies the powder exactly where you want it. (In contrast to Pestene powder). - It is also much less irritating to my nose.

I couldn't say if any one product worked more effectively than another as I used all of the above treatments (based partly on time restraints or the weather being unsuitable for a wet treatment and partly on the theory that parasites develop resistance). I also spaced the treatments 4 to 7 days apart to allow time for new eggs to hatch.

The Nucidol was easier to apply than I had anticipated; I used a hand trigger gun sprayer and only took about 2 litres (of diluted solution) to wet a short-coated donkey to the skin. Thankfully my long coated donkey Katy did not appear as badly infested and I got away with only wetting her backline. I did find that a stiff bristle brush, smoothing with the lay of the hair, was imperative for working the liquid into the coat. The most difficult part was choosing the right sort of time weather-wise where the solution didn't dry so fast that you couldn't see where you'd been with it, and not too cold so as to create a chill.

Bark Eating Problems?

I recently visited local member Judy Lockwood to deliver the second prize won in the AGM raffle. Judy happened to be having trouble with her donkey, horse and pony stripping and eating bark from the trees. They had already destroyed a number of trees in their 20-acre paddock and were having to be yarded into a smaller paddock.

After asking around on Judy's behalf I discovered that this problem is probably caused by donkeys looking for extra roughage and may be more common in spring when there is less natural fibre in the grass. If you are having this problem it is recommended to protect trees by painting with a mixture of hot Tabasco sauce and sump oil, chicken wire mesh can also prevent donkeys getting their teeth in.

Donkeys should be supplemented with an ample supply of straw (which will also help to ward off weight problems and prevent donkeys foundering), cut branches, logs or even tree stumps will help to fulfill their dietary needs, remembering that donkeys are browsers (eating trees and shrubs) more so than they are grazing animals.

If your donkey's taste buds have become accustomed to good quality hay you can try sprinkling the straw with a watered down molasses mix to make it more palatable for them.

Mineral blocks should be available at all times providing they do NOT contain urea.

SEEDY TOE

For prevention of Seedy Toe and Healthy Hooves in general a calcium and biotin supplement is highly recommended. Cal Plus with Biotin is one example; reputedly giving good results, these types of supplements can be expensive though and do take months before the full benefit is seen. (Because it only affects new growth).

Providing hard, dry surfaces to stand on e.g. concreting the shelter floor may also help if the condition is due to moist pasture and/or soft ground. In addition I feel that nothing beats a brisk

daily walk on a gravel or paved road to help stimulate good blood flow to the feet, naturally improving growth and repair.

SEAWEED MEAL

Well there was quite an influx of opinion as to the value of seaweed meal as a nutritional supplement with a number of people touting the benefits to general health and well being. Even donkey Business III touts kelp (seaweed meal) as an ideal supplement for hooves. Nutritionally it does contain a large number of essential vitamins and more importantly many trace minerals. Other members, however, warned about inhalation of seaweed meal, some donkeys apparently greedily tried to binge, coughed and accidentally inhaled the product causing serious breathing difficulty, in some cases leading to collapse. Some breeders reported problems associated with iodine toxicity causing thyroid problems in foals, and other fertility problems that may have been associated with too much seaweed meal.

Pat Coleby, in her latest revised book she says seaweed meal should not be fed mixed in with other feed, thus forcing the donkeys to eat it as part of their feed. There have been problems, particularly with Iodine levels with this method. Our vet, an equine specialist, agrees that it should only be given in moderation, OK as part of mineral licks etc, but not in larger quantities.

As with all supplements there can be dangers associated with over consumption and toxicity of certain elements. Seaweed meal is very high in iodine and as such the dose needs to be carefully calculated. The following quotation from an article on seaweed on the Web, which may help to work out a suitable dose

The average horse requires approximately 2mg of Iodine per day with toxicity occurring at 40mg/day (Lewis L.D. 1995), [Please remember that this level is for an averaged sized horse and a donkeys requirement may be quite different] At 3 g per day you are adding approx 1.5mg of Iodine to the diet based on Natrakelp's analysis of Tasmanian Bull Kelp, Liquid seaweed such as Natrakelp, has a recommended dosage of 10 mls second daily, each dose containing 1.43mg of Iodine - a very safe level of iodine to add to the diet.

A safe administration of seaweed depends on a number of factors, including the source and type of seaweed, the level iodine in the diet and the form in which it is fed. Seaweed attracts heavy metals thus it is important the seaweed comes from clean waters. A large majority of the seaweed used in Australian stock feeds is harvested from clean waters off Tasmania, and as such the heavy metal content should be low. The level of iodine in seaweed products vary significantly, and as such your source should state on the bottle or in their literature the level of iodine present in their product.

The best advise, as with any supplement, is to read the label/literature to assess contents, ascertain nutrient in current diet based on weight of feeds, and decide if your horse really needs it. <http://equinehealth.alphalink.com.au/articles.html>