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Nutritional Management of Equine Grain Associated Disorders

There are a growing class of horses that due to genetic or metabolic causes have health issues that affects the horse's reaction to glucose. Several conditions have different causes and different clinical signs, but require similar nutritional management. Cushing Syndrome, Peripheral Cushings, Metabolic Syndrome and Insulin Resistance are conditions of the horse that fall into this classification. While this state can affect horses of any breed or age, the typical horse is over 7 years of age and most commonly affects pony and draft breeds. A term is being used in the industry called *Equine Grain Associated Disorders* to group these different conditions into one heading for nutritional management.

The main nutritional concern of horses with one of the above conditions is to limit the non-structural carbohydrate (NSC) of the horse's diet. Non-structural carbohydrates include the starches and sugars of grains and the starches, sugars and fructan content of grasses. Since grains are the most concentrated source of NSC in the typical equine diet, its management must be addressed first.

- ✓ Avoid grains that are high in corn and/or molasses products as they are some of the highest sources of NSC. In turn, look for ingredients such as beet pulp, soy hulls, and fat sources like flax.
- ✓ Make sure the horse's amino acid, vitamin and mineral nutrition is being supplied. The Progressive Nutrition ProAdvantage Diet balancers contain no cereal grains and are an excellent source of nutrition for horses with one of these conditions.
- ✓ Find an appropriate calorie source if the horse is in need of added body condition. Since some horses are more sensitive to NSC than others, there is no hard and fast rule of source or amount. Fat is always a safe calorie source for horses with any of these conditions, this is what can be found in Envision Classic.
- ✓ In some cases, the NSC content of the forage may need to be evaluated. This is an important step once the concentrate portion of the diet is under control.

This group of conditions in horses is a very confusing topic today. Consultation with a qualified veterinarian and realistic nutritional management incorporating the Progressive Nutrition products can help these horses to maintain a good quality of life.