



Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome

Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome (EGUS) is a condition that affects many horses, including upwards of 70% of performance horses. This condition can cause signs that vary from poor performance and weight loss to an attitude change or recurrent colic.

Diagnosis: Gastroscopy is the only way to confirm EGUS

- Horses are fasted overnight, then a gastroscope is passed like a nasogastric tube into the horses stomach. It is important to remember that this cannot diagnose colonic ulcers
- A fecal occult blood test is available to help diagnose gastric or colonic ulcers, but it is important to remember that there is no way to confirm where the blood is coming from

Treatment: Gastrogard is the best treatment available

- Gastrogard(omeprazole) decreases the amount of acid produced in the stomach. It is important to remember that it takes 3 days for this medication to reach therapeutic levels.
- There are several forms of compounded omeprazole available. These medications have been shown to be less stable over time and do not often carry the indicated amount of medication.
- A combination of ranitidine and sucralfate can also be a viable treatment
- Succeed is a gut conditioner that can be particularly effective in treating chronic cases. It is also able to treat both gastric and colonic ulcers

Management

- Concentrates: Grains containing more molasses and “sweet feeds” can be irritating to the lining of the stomach. Pelleted feeds are often tolerated better
- Forage: Constant access to forage is helpful in maintaining a less acidic environment in the stomach. Using slow feed hay nets, offering alfalfa hay and as much turnout as possible are helpful.
- There are several supplements produced that can help maintain a healthy stomach. It is important to remember that bioavailability (the amount of medication that is absorbed) is variable, so there is not necessarily a “best” supplement
- Providing a constant routine and reducing as much environmental stress as possible is key
- Providing a preventive dose of omeprazole (1/4 tube gastrogard or 1 dose ulcergard) starting 3 days prior to a stressful event should be considered