



Metabolic Disease Management

Metabolic disease in horses can be divided into 2 major categories of Pituitary Pars Intermedia Dysfunction (PPID), formerly known as “Cushing’s Disease” and Equine Metabolic Syndrome. Both of these conditions can have varying degrees of insulin resistance.

Testing: Early detection of these conditions is key in helping to prevent secondary conditions such as obesity, laminitis and a suppressed immune system, to name a few. Blood is pulled and submitted to an outside lab.

- Testing is most reliable from mid November to mid July but can be done any time.
- Bloodwork should be repeated yearly as metabolic status can change from year to year and to be sure the appropriate dose of medication is given

Diet: Reduction of sugars in the diet is key!

- Concentrates: These should be low in starch and higher in fat. A few commercially produced feeds include Safe Choice Special Care and Purina L/S
- Ration balancer: These can be used to supplement necessary nutrients without the added calories that some grains may provide
- Forage: New, sugar-rich grasses should be avoided. Grasses are also higher in late afternoon, so turnout at this time should be avoided. Grazing muzzles can also be used to limit grass intake.

Environment

- When possible, a regular exercise program should be used.
- Horses may still have trouble completely shedding their winter coats, so body clipping may be helpful to keep them from being too hot
- Using slow feed hay nets can increase the amount of time for horses to consume their hay. It can also be soaked for 15-30 minutes to help reduce external sugars.

Medications: These can help to decrease frequency and side effects of these conditions which improves quality of life

- Prascend is the medication of choice to treat PPID. This is a commercially produced form of pergolide which allows more consistency and stability with treatment. Side effects are uncommon but can include inappetence, loose manure, and weight loss.
- Thyro-L can be used to increase metabolism and help with weight loss. Hypothyroidism is rare in horses, so this medication can often be discontinued once the appropriate body condition is achieved.
- Metabarol is a supplement that can reduce insulin insensitivity