

## **Heat Stress**

We are seeing a high number of heat stress cases already this year. Some so severe that they are colicking or foundering. People have a lot more surface area compared to weight than horses do. We are like french fries-we lose heat rapidly and are more susceptible to the cold. Horses are like baked potatoes-they lose heat slowly and do better in the cold. We are a long way from the end of the summer so please monitor your horses carefully for signs of heat stress and anhidrosis (loss of ability to sweat.) As a horse loses the ability to sweat, his temperature rises and he begins to breath hard to release the heat. In our hot and humid summer temperatures this can be a losing battle. If the horse's temperature continues to rise, organ damage and eventual death can occur.

### **What to watch for**

- 1) Rapid breathing while just standing around. This is often the first sign an owner will notice.
- 2) Dry coat in spite of high temperatures. Horses must sweat to cool off and if they can't their temperatures will climb. A horse's normal temp is below 101 and in the summer it can rise to 101-102.5 with exercise but if your horse is 102 or higher at rest-he is too hot.
- 3) Exercise intolerance, staggering, colicky behavior, and muscle cramps.

### **What to do:**

- 1) Get your horse out of the sun if possible and into a cooler area with a fan on him.
- 2) Cold hose him and use a sweat scraper every few minutes to scrape off the warmed water otherwise the water on his skin surface will further insulate the heat as it warms up so rinse, scrape, rinse, scrape....to get the temperature down more quickly.
- 3) Please let us know what is going on with your horse and we can determine if medical intervention is necessary.
- 4) There are some over the counter products that can be helpful such as One-AC to help promote sweating. A half a can of beer twice a day can also help

with sweating.

5) For those horses that do not respond we are seeing good response with acupuncture provided by our colleague Dr. Kathy Mitchener of Pins and Needles.

### **Safety Tips**

- 1) Try to ride during the cooler parts of the day-morning and night.
- 2) Make sure there is a source of electrolytes for your horse in the form of a salt block or free choice minerals or a scoop of electrolytes in your feed once a day. You can also use electrolytes in ONE bucket of water but make sure you don't put electrolytes in all of your horse's water as this would be like drinking seawater and will cause dehydration and eventual kidney damage.
- 3) Haul your horse during the cooler parts of the day.
- 4) Provide shade and good airflow for your horse whether it's a run in shed, trees or a stall with a fan.
- 5) Elderly horses and horses with pre-existing breathing problems can be more susceptible to the heat so keep a close eye on them this summer.

\*\*\*Be careful using products on your horse's skin, especially along the topline, at this time of year. We are seeing chemical burns. The high heat and humidity coupled with the sun shining is causing the chemicals to react and burn. Any liniments/blisters or other harsh substances should be avoided right now or rinsed off before turning your horse out. Test patch any new product on one spot on your horse and wait a few days to make sure there is no reaction. Little black flakes of skin appearing as dandruff are due to irritation so watch for this type of reaction. (Pink skinned horses would have yellowish flakes.) \*\*\*