

## Gastric Ulcer Treatment: A Two-Step Approach

Veterinarians and horse owners recognize the harmful effects of gastric ulceration in their horses. Colic, chronic diarrhea, decreased appetite, and weight loss are documented clinical signs of gastric ulceration. Anecdotal reports point to changes in behavior as well, including depressed attitude or a surly, sour disposition.

Fortunately, scientists and nutritionists identified the frequency in which gastric ulcers occur in horses and formulated products that aid in their prevention and treatment. The goals of gastric ulcer treatment are to eliminate clinical signs, promote ulcer healing, prevent ulcer recurrence, and reduce the cost and duration of treatment. Many products are available for the treatment and management of equine gastric ulcer syndrome (EGUS). These include compounds to inhibit gastric acid secretion such as proton pump inhibitors, and supplements that support balanced pH levels in the stomach and maintain healthy gastric mucosa.

### Proton pump inhibitors

Proton pump inhibitors prevent the production of acid by the stomach. These compounds work by blocking the enzyme in the wall of the stomach that creates acid. With acid production on hold, the stomach and esophagus are given time to heal. Proton pump inhibitors induce a prolonged antisecretory effect, allowing for once-daily dosing. Omeprazole is the most popular proton pump inhibitor used in horses.

### Gastric supplements

Supplements developed to support a healthy stomach are found in short- and long-acting formulas. Calcium carbonate-based supplements sustain normal pH levels for short periods of time. Supplements that contain calcium compounds plus aluminum hydroxide or magnesium hydroxide work for longer periods of time. Based on data from multiple studies in horses, it appears that gastric supplements help maintain normal levels of acid in the stomach. This creates an environment in which ulcers are less likely to develop. Equine practitioners believe that administration dependably relieves clinical signs associated with gastric ulceration.

### Recommended uses

Proton pump inhibitors and gastric supplements have distinct purposes in the management of gastric ulceration. Proton pump inhibitors like omeprazole can heal lesions in the stomach. Though treatment is expensive, this must be the first step taken to cure the ulcers already present in the stomach. Once an appropriate course of a proton pump inhibitor is concluded, a gastric supplement is recommended as long as the horse is susceptible to gastric ulceration (especially during stressful times such as hard training and competition schedules or frequent stall confinement). Gastric supplements are safe for long-term use and are often available in a form, either powder or pellets, that allows for ease of feeding.

Neigh-Lox<sup>®</sup> is a long-acting gastric support supplement. Scientifically formulated, Neigh-Lox is appropriate for horses of all ages, from foals and weanlings to mature performance horses competing in any sport. Neigh-Lox's research-proven pelleted formula is readily accepted by horses and regularly recommended by veterinarians.



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