

Feeding the Growing Horse

The nutritional requirements and management of growing horses has probably been subjected to the most scrutiny and research of any class of horse in recent years. In the past, breeders often tried to achieve maximum growth potential in the early years, causing soundness issues due to overfeeding (rapid growth), vitamin and mineral imbalances, along with inadequate exercise, thereby predisposing your horses to developmental orthopedic problems. I am just going to concentrate on the importance of balancing vitamins and minerals and the prevention of overfeeding.

Developmental orthopedic disease (DOD) is the general name given to all growth disturbances resulting from any alteration in normal bone-formation or growth. The number one cause of DOD appears to be genetics that is amplified by too rapid a growth rate. A rapid growth rate is caused by an animal's: genetic potential, high energy intake, and slow growth early in life followed by a growth spurt due to an increased feed intake. How does this happen? By not providing an adequate amount or a poorly fortified creep feed to a nursing foal, then after weaning, overfeeding for rapid growth causes the growth spurt.

So how do we determine if a feed is properly fortified to maximize growth, yet avoid mineral deficiencies and excessive dietary energy intake in order to decrease the risk of DOD? Excessive energy has been linked to diets high in carbohydrates (grain concentrates), which stimulate spikes in metabolic hormones such as insulin, growth hormone, or thyroid hormone, which causes erratic growth patterns and increases the risk of DOD. Research has demonstrated that diets high in fiber and fat, therefore low in carbohydrates or starch, will stimulate skeletal growth while simultaneously lower orthopedic disorders. Likewise, without proper mineral fortification, primarily calcium, phosphorus, zinc and copper, to support the rate of growth, DOD's may occur.

Growth is also limited by the adequate intake and quality of protein. Proteins are made up of chains of amino acids, which constitute the building blocks for growth and development. Limiting or essential amino acids are insufficient in forages, therefore, they must be provided in the grain mix. Look for grain mixes guaranteeing levels of Lysine and Methionine & Cystine, which are required to maximize the growth potential of the foal.

Due to the delicate balance of energy and vitamin/mineral fortification in order for a foal to reach its maximum growth potential, Triple Crown has introduced Triple Crown Growth. Triple Crown Growth is a high fat, beet pulp based complete feed. It contains enough dietary fiber for horses to thrive without, or on considerably less, hay or pasture, or if hay is in short supply or of poor quality. Since high fiber feeds tend to have fewer calories than grain diets, Triple Crown has incorporated high levels of vegetable oil and stabilized rice bran to replace lost calories. Furthermore, Triple Crown uses organic minerals for improved absorption, probiotics to promote good intestinal health of the digestive micro flora, and digestive enzymes to enhance the small intestine's natural ability to break down nutrients. We also add MTB 100 and Biomos, which are derivatives of yeast, designed to

neutralize challenges to the digestive system from mycotoxins found in hay and pasture and pathogenic bacteria such as E. Coli and Salmonella, which is particularly beneficial to the growing horse.

Triple Crown Growth utilizes the latest research regarding nutritional support for sound growth in horses. Providing a diet low in carbohydrates and high in fat and fiber has demonstrated reduced spikes in growth hormone levels providing the horse a more consistent growth pattern, thereby helping to reduce the incidence of DOD's. Compared to traditional grain based diets, research has demonstrated that Triple Crown Growth supports sound growth in a superior manner.