

WELCOME

to the *White Horse Herbals*
Newsletter for **Spring 2015**.

I hope you find the general equine health information and focus on an interesting spring herb - Schisandra a Chinese herb known as 'five flavours fruit' due to the range of taste from its red berry fruit - helpful and informative.



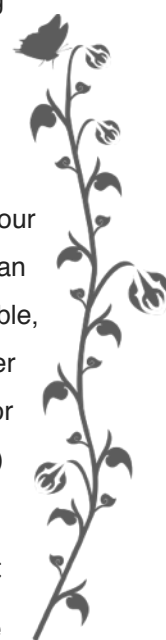
WHAT'S HAPPENING FOR OUR HORSES HEALTH-WISE THIS SPRING?

We have had a very cold winter with lots of frosts and even a bit of snow! So I'm sure we're all looking forward to warmer days with a bit more light to ride in the evening.

Good quality hay has been difficult to find late in the season, mostly due to less than optimal hay making conditions over summer so if you find a good supplier - nurture the relationship!

Managing our horses through the spring pasture growth can be challenging. While the ideal is to have our horses on the paddock all day long, some horses just don't tolerate seasonal changes well. So try to plan ahead if you have a horse that is grass affected - whether it's by sugar, toxins or allergies. Where possible, feed your horses mature grasses which generally have less sugar content but avoid rye grass and clover which have higher levels of sugar. Also watch for mould on older dried stalks that may be an indicator for mycotoxins. Feed additional fibre in the form of good quality hay (soaked to remove sugar, if required) and meadow chaff and beet pulp as a supplementary feed, keeping any grains to a minimum.

Herbs can have a preventative action for managing the challenges of the grass affected horse. If you start a herbal tonic 4-6 weeks before the seasonal change, it's likely that you will minimise the impact of the spring flush of grass on your horse.



SKIN CONDITIONS GOING INTO SPRING & SUMMER

Mud fever, rain scald and greasy heel are caused by the same organism - *Dermatophilus congolensis* - which attacks the skin over different parts of a horse's body leaving it raw, infected and scabby. Although it can occur at any time of the year, prolonged wet conditions can contribute to its appearance over winter and into spring.

There are **two approaches** to dealing with these conditions.

The **first** is internally where prevention is better than a cure. If you know your horse is likely to experience any of these conditions, then you can support the immune system, help cleanse the blood and strengthen the skin via herbs such as cleavers, calendula, nettle, and echinacea.

Secondly, externally by applying Manuka cream to the area, after it has been cleaned with mild soap and dried completely, can assist with healing. Manuka has excellent anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties and is very effective at managing these types of skin conditions.



EQUINE NUTRITION - FEEDING RACE HORSES FORAGE ONLY DIETS

A group of Swedish equine nutrition researchers recently conducted a study to assess the possible benefits and limitations of feeding high energy, grass forage-only diets to athletic horses, specifically a group of Standardbred horses in racing. These horses are known to have very high energy requirements, comparable to thoroughbred race horses or horses competing at high levels e.g. Eventing.



The horses in the study were fed grass forages consisting mainly of timothy and meadow fescue. In a few cases, the diet had to be supplemented with lucerne/alfalfa to meet the crude protein requirements.

The researchers discovered that it was possible for horses to compete, and win races, on a forage-only diet. They also noted that, in comparison to horses that were fed a high concentrate (grain) diet, the training responses were similar in young horses with free access to high energy forage as in horses in conventional training, that less aggression was observed during waiting for entry to the stable from the paddock and that there were no observable health issues related to the forage diet.



They concluded that forage-based diets could support better health and welfare for horses and may not be a limitation to performance.



GETTING THE BEST FROM HERBS

The simplest way to get the best out of a herb is a tea or infusion where the dried plant material is covered with boiling water, allowed to steep for 5-10 minutes, strained and then consumed. The resulting liquid can be kept in the fridge for 3-5 days. You can add this liquid to your horse's drinking water or feed mix. For example, chamomile is a good choice for a nervous horse, while adding lavender or calendula to a hoof soaking boot is useful for abscesses or rosemary can be used as a final rinse of your horse's coat after washing, leaving the skin and hair clean and shiny.

A decoction involves boiling the herbs for a period of time. This is the method usually used for the roots and bark of herbs that need more heating and breaking down to release their active ingredients. Many of you will be familiar with the "Spring Tonic" I make for your horses which is based on a decoction of Devil's Claw, Fenugreek, Dandelion root, Withania root and Green tea. Like an infusion, it won't last long but if kept in the fridge it should maintain its quality for about 3-4 weeks.



Alcohol is one of the most relied upon liquids for the extraction of active ingredients from herbal plants. Alcohol is also a preservative allowing the herb to retain its goodness for up to two years. The resulting tinctures created through a cold infusion process is much stronger than an infusion using water or vinegar. For example, depending on the strength of the infusion, 15-30 drops of a tincture can be considered equivalent to one cup of fresh herbal infusion.





SCHISANDRA

Schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*) is a Chinese herb known as 'five flavours fruit' due to the range of taste from its red berry fruit. The whole fruit is said to have a salty taste, the skin and pulp are sweet while the kernel is pungent and bitter! Traditionally used in Chinese medicine as a tonic and sedative, it has been extensively studied in Russia for over 40 years and was rumoured to be used by Russian cosmonauts on their return from space as Schisandra increases physical working capacity and affords a stress-protective effect against a broad spectrum of harmful factors including heat shock, frostbite, immobilisation, swimming under load in an atmosphere with decreased air pressure, irradiation, and heavy metal intoxication.

From an equine perspective, studies of healthy racehorses and show jumpers who were given Schisandra showed reduced heart rate and respiratory frequency, increased plasma glucose and decreased lactate levels. The show jumpers completed the circuit in a shorter time than the horses who didn't receive the Schisandra and the racehorses were on average 1.8 seconds faster over 800m.

So Schisandra is a wonderful herb to support our horses over spring as we are bringing them back into work by improving mental and physical performance and increasing resistance to the effects of stress.

Wishing you and your horses a happy and healthy Spring!

Regards,

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CLINIC ROOM AND PEOPLE CONSULTATIONS

The clinic room has been busy over the last couple of weeks! It's pleasing to see many people taking the opportunity to get their tonics and supplements sorted in anticipation of a busy Spring.

The White Horse Herbals Clinic Room is based in West Melton. If you aren't able to make the trip out to West Melton then I have access to clinic rooms in Christchurch, or a home visit is also a possibility.

Please see the Herbs for Humans page on the [website](#) or give me a call or text on 021 944 250 for further information.



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