

That West Nile Thing (The shot heard round the world??)

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This is part of a series of natural horse care articles presented to help you make more informed choices in your quest for a more natural life for your horses.

Ah, to Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate, that is the current question! In a changing horse world, you can hear the paradigms popping:

- Why, you can't ride a barefoot horse!
- Ride bareback without a bit? You must be kidding!
- Horses must be chemically dewormed daily or semi-monthly, or they will die!
- You have to give vaccines, of course you do!

As the hysteria over West Nile Virus sweeps the nation, increasing calls come in from concerned horse caretakers asking, "What should we be doing about West Nile?" The answer is, we should all be supporting optimum health!

We know from the teachings of William Albrecht and C.J. Fenzenau (and Jim Zamzow!), that Disease is one of Nature's Garbage Collectors. Viruses, bacteria, and parasites are part of The Plan to take out the weak and debilitated beings and plants. The best defense for all is a healthy and fully-functioning immune system.

A little perspective on West Nile Virus is in order.

- As of Monday, September 9, only 43 deaths and 985 illnesses nationally have been reported in humans since the first outbreak in New York in 1999. That year, 7 people in New York died from the virus. One had HIV, and 3 more were on immunosuppressive drugs. All 7 were in their 70's or 80's. By comparison, over 2,000 people died from the flu in New York in 1999. Nationally, the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratory has confirmed 645 cases of West Nile Virus in horses, and about 30% have died or have been euthanized. Contrast this to the number of horses that would die of other diseases, colic, founder, accidents etc. in the same time period.
- West Nile Virus has not been absolutely proven to even exist!

According to A. J. Cann in *Principles of Molecular Virology*, Koch defined the four famous criteria now known as Koch's postulates which are still generally regarded as the proof that an infectious agent is responsible for a specific disease:

1. The agent must be present in every case of the disease.
2. The agent must be isolated from the host

and grown in vitro.

3. The disease must be reproduced when a pure culture of the agent is inoculated into a healthy susceptible host.
4. The same agent must be recovered once again from the experimentally infected host.

These postulates have not been satisfied for West Nile Virus. But also remember, host defense is the most important factor in determining if a being will be infected with any agent.

- The leading cause of bird deaths is pesticide poisoning, and not West Nile Virus, as confirmed by New York State Wildlife official Dr. Ward Stone. Of birds collected for sampling, the vast majority had fallen prey to poisoning by common lawn chemicals or other pesticides. Ironically, the pesticides such as malathion that are being used to eradicate mosquitoes are far more deadly and toxic than the Virus they are trying to prevent. Not only to birds, but to humans as well. Neurological problems, cancer, reproductive defects and more have been linked to common pesticides.
- Jim West, an activist, has focused his attention on the use of MTBE (Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether) as a gasoline additive to reduce smog, noting that the majority of cases in birds and humans were in areas with high levels of pollution, where MTBE is used.
- The vaccine currently available for horses has not been proven yet to be either safe or effective.

Vaccinations in general are coming under more scrutiny, not only in the holistic vet world, but among mainstream veterinarians. The AVMA protocol currently being recommended is that annual (or even more frequent) vaccines are probably not necessary and may in fact be contributing to stress on the immune system and other health problems. Vaccinating only every 3 years is suggested as being adequate and perhaps more appropriate. Also, cautions are being issued against vaccinating horses that are debilitated or experiencing any chronic or acute health problems. The "one size fits all" program of the "Spring Thing" for every horse may be no longer appropriate—individual considerations are a must. Vaccinologist Dr. Ronald Schultz of University of Wisconsin-Madison, describes the risks from the rhino vaccine as "mild to severe allergic reactions, viral latency, and abortion if given during pregnancy."

Horse Journal, January 2002, states, "If you are concerned about over-vaccination and would like to pay for an assessment of your horses' blood titers, ask your vet to contact your state's Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal

Health Diagnostic Laboratory. These labs are far more likely to be set up to do the necessary serology than are commercial labs. The USDA Veterinary/Animal Biologics Lab (515/663-7331) is a good general contact for questions about serological testing and/or laboratory facilities. You can also contact the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation for a list of certified labs: NACLA Secretariat, Office of Standards Services, National Institute of Standards and Technology, PO Box 4045, Gaithersburg, MD 20885-4045, 301/975-6472 or email naclasecretariat@nist.gov."

Among holistic veterinarians, the concensus is even stronger that vaccines may be either ineffective or harmful, or both. Dr. Donna Starita of Boring, OR, feels that if vaccines are given to horses, they can safely be given to yearlings as single vaccines, spaced a month apart. That should confer lifetime immunity and in the case of a broodmare, she feels the offspring should even inherit the immunity from that dam's yearling shots. Dr. Kim Henneman of Park City, UT, does not vaccinate her own horses at home. For competition horses, she gives only Eastern and Western Encephalitis and Tetanus, and those only every 2 years. She feels that some of the nerve culture based vaccines are predisposing factors to EPM, that horses are the most over-vaccinated of all domestic animals, and that every vaccine has side effects and repercussions in the future health of that animal. Dr. Henneman also recommends that if you choose to vaccinate competition horses, do so at least 4 weeks prior to an event. Dr. Paul Bruton of Southlake, TX, feels that the respiratory vaccines (flu, rhino, strangles) are a total waste of time. American Holistic Veterinary Medical President Dr. Joyce Harman believes that frequent vaccines of any kind weaken the immune system and thus perpetuate the very diseases they were designed to prevent. She feels most cases of rhino are minor, and disagrees with the use of antibiotics and Bute or Banamine. The fever is needed to "cook" the virus and antibiotics are ineffective against a virus, and only weaken the immune system more. She recommends boosting the immune system with vitamin C and probiotics. All recommend that Thuja homeopathic 30 C be given right after vaccination. Use single vaccines only, no combos, and do not give a vaccine in conjunction with any other stressors, such as worming.

As usual in health issues, the key is in making informed choices. As for me and my horses, we will do the same basic program of chelated minerals and probiotics as we have for 20 years, with perhaps a little extra vitamin C products and immune-boosting minerals for both 2- and 4-leggeds. Natural antibiotic alternatives are always on my shelf. I personally do not vaccinate my

horses at this point in my life, and have not for about 12 years now. But if you choose to do so, there are some ways to mitigate the stress. Please do understand that vaccination is a major medical event, and as such should not be combined with any other stressor such as worming, hauling, dental work, competition or any other chemical, physical or emotional stress. Multivalent (combined) shots are best avoided, as recommended by holistic veterinarians. Use of flower essences right after removing the needle, followed by a soothing clay poultice to help pull out toxins and heavy metals in the vaccine are two ways to help the local irritation and reduce reactions. Probiotics are always in order at stressful times, along with a big boost of vitamin C. Even though horses supposedly make their own vitamin C (unlike humans, who do not), I still prefer to boost it at times of extra stress.

An article by Alan Clemetson, MD, Professor Emeritus of Tulane University School of Medicine, which appeared in the *Townsend Letter for Doctors and Patients*, Jan 2002, says, "It has been shown that the toxins or toxoids of the usual inoculants (vaccines) cause increased blood histamine levels in animals. . . It will be possible to study the protective effects of vitamin C in reducing histaminemia. Ascorbic acid (vitamin C) aids the conversion of histamine to hydanton-5-acetic acid for elimination and has been shown to protect against the toxicity of inoculations, both in animals and humans. Even some soldiers going to the Gulf War suffered severe reactions to some of their inoculations, so this matter is of concern to the armed forces as well as the rest of us. . . we are defective mammals, lacking fur and lacking the ability to make our own vitamin C. We take great care to provide ourselves with clothes and housing to make up for our lack of fur, but we do not always take enough care to make up for our inborn error of metabolism. It is odd that medical schools, which teach so much about DNA and the genetic code, do not pay more attention to teaching nutrition and about a major human genetic defect shared by us all". Mercury, copper and other heavy metals in the vaccines are also shown to raise blood histamine levels, says Dr. Clemetson.

Stay away from pesticides which are harmful to birds...and other living things! Remember that birds are, quite literally, "the canary in the mine." Dead birds indicate a hostile environment on the planet, and we are not in a position to flee the mine! Imagine a world without birds...if we don't get a grip on pesticide use, we are headed there, and you don't want to know what the outcome of that will be. Build a bat house, and entice them to live with you, they love mosquitoes! A Delaware study cited by Master Gardeners at Washington State University proved that bug zappers do more harm than good. First of all, they actually attract more insects to your property. Secondly, when the researchers examined a total of 13,789 insect electrocuted in a light trap, only 31 of them were biting flies or mosquitoes. There were 6,670 harmless and non-biting insects, as well as 2,000 predator

insects and insect parasites which help out in the garden. Strategic use of natural insect repellents, keeping horses inside during early evening peak mosquito time, drying up standing water and using the Bt mosquito cakes or bits where needed (available from Home Garden Products at <http://www.homeharvest.com/bt.htm>) are some ecologically sound solutions to the mosquito problem. There are also mosquito fish, guppy size critters that eat mosquito larvae, which can be introduced to your ponds or other water bodies. Organic Apple Cider Vinegar, unpasteurized, fed at the rate of 1/4 cup a day, and/or garlic granules (Feedmark.com) will help repel insects, too.

And what about FEAR! Dr. Virginia Hunt of UCLA, writing in *Infinite Mind*, speaks of "M Fields" or morphogenic fields. David Hawkins, MD, and the author of *Power vs Force*, also speaks of these energy patterns as attractor fields that become physical reality. We are powerful manifestors, even of what we don't want. The Bible teaches us, "That which I fear, has come to pass" and "As I believe, it is done unto me". Tracie Audette in Palmer, AK, says, "Vaccinating for this disease doesn't make any more sense than it ever does. Mother Nature always bats last--you put something like that in a body, how nature responds to it is totally out of your hands. I'd rather be 'sick' as Mother Nature intended, not some scientists' idea of how I should be 'made sick.' I choose this for my animals as well. Should they become sick, I have every confidence that within our wonderful family network there is all the help we need for them to recover; or go on if it is for their highest good. Faith is a wonderful thing. Choosing it over fear and drama is where Peace is." And Julie Barker in Citra, FL (a hotbed of WNV in horses), says, "Just for the record, I personally on my farm here in FL, do not vaccinate either with nosodes or the traditional way against WNV. I personally feel that if your horses are on the Dynamite Program, that they have been given a blessing and a gift of great immune boosting power...I have a very old pony, 57 years old, to be exact, who is fine and sipping her Pelleted Grain Ration 'soup,' although many horses have been put down all around us. You can make your own assumptions as to why she does not get it— but I know what I attribute it to."

In conclusion, you are your own guru when it comes to health choices for your horses. Build a healthy immune system with clean, pesticide-free feeds and the appropriate minerals. Vaccinate and deworm advisedly, after doing your research and consulting with a trusted veterinarian. And most important, keep your wits about you, in a world where everyone is currently losing theirs. Pogo says, "We have met the enemy, and he is us!" A great article titled "*The Doors of Perception: Why Americans Will Believe Almost Anything*" by Dr. Tim O'Shea states, "If everyone believes something, it is probably wrong!" And, one of my personal favorite sayings comes from A Course In Miracles... "I could choose Peace instead of this!"

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Some related links you might enjoy:

- <http://www.909.shot.com>
- http://www.mercola.com/2001/oct/3/west_nile_virus.htm
- <http://www.mercola.com/2001/jul/4/pesticides.htm>
- <http://www.safe2use.com/poisons-pesticides/pesticides/malathion/unknown-risks.htm>
- <http://www.avma.org/policies/vaccination.htm>
- <http://www.mercola.com/2001/aug/15/perception.htm>
- <http://www.holistichorsekeeping.com/husbandry/vaccinationsproblems.html>

HOLISTIC EVENTS

- **Southeastern Gathering of Holistic Horseowners**

Sunday, October 13, 2002, 10 am - 2 pm
Location: Squared Away Farm
11445 Moccasin Gap Road
Tallahassee FL 32309
For information: (850) 893-0693
email: nshorizons@att.net
No fee for this gathering, please RSVP

Roundtable discussion among the attendees, with each attendee sharing their news related to holistic horse care and alternative health care modalities with the group. Topics to include: Tellington Touch, Photonic therapy, Iridology, General holistic health care, Essential oils stories, Holistic laminitis/founder care, West Nile Virus, Strasser trim, Allergies.

- **"Concurrent Care: A Therapeutic Model for Animal Healing" IAATH Conference**

October 24-27, 2002
Location: Portland State Office Building,
Portland, Oregon
For information: www.IAATH.com
Pam_Wittenburg@ihpc.net
or (503) 538-5425

Guest speakers include: Todd Merrell, CSHS; Judy Aizuss, Flower Essence Practitioner; author Catherine Bird; author Margrit Coates; Linda Tellington-Jones; Juliea McCall, Feldenkrais Practitioner; Adrienne Moore, DVM, Holistic Veterinarian

- **"Things Your Horse Would Love to Tell You" Equine Seminar**

Saturday, November 9, 2002, 9 am - 4pm
Location: Silver Dollar Ranch
37333 N. 12th St., Phoenix, Arizona
Featuring Regan Golob and Judy Sinner
Pre-register \$65/at the door \$75. For more information, call Yvonne Welz, (623) 935-1823, yvonne@thehorseshoof.com

At this seminar, you will learn: nutritional reflex points, a parasite reflex point, why your horse probably has a rib out of place, how acupuncture meridians in your horse's feet affect performance, how to eliminate energy blocks, stretching exercises and meridian massage, misguided feeding practices and more!