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**The Equine Cushings Cure**

**By Nina Arbella**

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Equine Cushings disease is caused by a tumor in the pituitary gland, which is responsible for the production and regulation of hormones. Symptoms include a long, shaggy coat that does not shed, excessive drinking and urination, laminitis, a tendency for recurring infections in the hoof (foot abscesses), and a loss of muscle mass, especially along the topline and rump.

At Eye of the Storm Equine Rescue, we've discovered what appears to be a cure for Cushings disease in horses. We're not licensed nor are we doctors, but we know what has worked for our horses and for lots of others, so we wanted to share our experiences in case it helps cure your own horse of equine Cushings disease.

While looking through a nutritional healing book at Debra's Natural Gourmet in West Concord, Mass., I came across a sentence that said "Chasteberry feeds the pituitary gland." Chasteberry in recent times has been used mainly for "women's complaints." I know it works because it beats the crap out of PMS, you feel better in 20 minutes. "Hmm," I say, "I like chasteberry, let's see what it can do for our two Cushings horses."

Bess, our 26 year old Shetland had obvious symptoms: long hair that didn't shed and she was a sway back. Not as bad as some, but still obvious. I couldn't wait for the vet to take some blood to find out her "numbers." The results were positive for Cushings. I put her on one teaspoon twice a day, three weeks on and one week off. Though she began to shed her coat of "buffalo" hair almost immediately, she never was a very slick pony. But I was determined to keep her on the chasteberry one year before testing her blood again. If I saw results then, I would tell the world.

One year later, after Bess' test results came back, the vet said, "I don't know what you're doing, but keep on doing it." Bess' numbers were down 33 points! I don't know exactly what these numbers represent, but evidently this never happens in real life! After one year of feeding her pituitary gland, had I managed to reverse her Cushings disease? I was very excited as this ailment affects the lives of

## The Equine Cushings Cure

millions of old (and not so old) horses in so many negative ways. This disease is more common now than it has ever been in the past. No one really knows why, though I have my theories. That is another tale for another day.

I was getting whole chasteberry in one pound bulk bags from Natural Gourmet and running it through a coffee grinder. The seeds are very hard and I figured it would come out the other end the same way they went in, unless we knocked the shells off them. You run the grinder until most of the pinging of hard berries can't be heard anymore. You cannot grind them up completely, but that's okay. Horses are made to digest roughage. They handle the chunks just fine. You should have a grinder for this purpose only, as your coffee might taste funny if you use the grinder for both.

Right around the time I was ready to tell the world about this "cure," another product came on the market called Hormonize. It is a liquid and costs around \$45 per liter and lasts two weeks for your average size horse. That's \$90 per month to treat the horse. The developers of this product found it to

be effective not only on mares in heat, but it also did some impressive things for Cushings horses, too. It is sold for this purpose as well. It is an all natural herbal remedy. A bit pricey, though.

I checked out the ingredients. It is a tincture of chasteberry! I think they call it vitex or monks pepper on the back. I'm not sure. It greatly saddens me that the treatment for such a devastating disease sells for so much.

Horses don't need herbal tinctures. They can and do digest some pretty coarse stuff (have you ever tried to eat dry timothy hay?). They can not only digest the herb, but utilize it in that form beautifully.

Bess, unfortunately, died at age 28 when she decided her mission was accomplished, so we never got a third blood test from her. We have two other Cushings horses, and all of our older mares are on chasteberry as well. Junebug, who is 8 years old, was tested last year and we'll test her again soon to see where her numbers are. Snowdrop was never tested, but all her symptoms have disappeared and she is doing well at 24 years old.

If any of you out there would like to try chasteberry, here's what to do. Go to your local health food store and special order one pound bulk bag whole chastetree berry from the Frontier herb company (please mention Eye of the Storm Equine Rescue when you do). You might want to order more than one bag so that when you're down to one you can reorder. One bag will cost you less than \$20 and will last a couple of months per horse.

Run the berries through your coffee grinder and feed one teaspoon twice a day with feed. We give the same amount to horses and ponies. It works on both mares and geldings. Give it to them three weeks on and one week off all year round. It will even keep the mares from being quite so crabby in the spring.

We also give them all vitamin E in the evening, vitamin C in the morning, and MSM. No sugars or carbohydrates (not even a carrot). There are feeds out there that are low in both, such as Blue Seal Racer and some of the senior feeds (do some research). All in all, chasteberry is the answer. Even our

## The Equine Cushings Cure

two 30-year old mares don't have Cushings, only Bess, Junebug, and Snowdrop, who came to us with the disease and it appears to be reversed. I never had horses of my own get Cushings. I have every horse in town that has Cushings on chasteberry and they're all doing great! This is a cheap, easy, healthy remedy for Cushings disease.

Nina Arbella is founder and president of Eye of the Storm Equine Rescue of Stow, Massachusetts. Contact Nina and visit the rescue center's website at

## Addiction Treatment Centers Using Experiential Therapies

**By Marina Petroni**

Life is experience. Substance dependence overtakes a person's ability to make her own decisions to experience life, and life is no longer actively participated in. Therefore, in overcoming addiction, it is vital to learn to re-experience life. This lesson helps a treatment center resident reintegrate into the world after therapy is through. Experiential therapy is this bridge to leaving a life of substance dependency and commencing a life of health, both physical and mental. Experiential therapy is a necessary component in the steps towards a complete therapy. In addition to counseling and more traditional therapies, experiential is the door to the world - it forces the patient to test herself, to get up when she falls, to learn that giving up is not an option. This is a vital lesson to learn when overcoming addiction, as when problems arise after therapy, the former patient will remember that there are other means of dealing with problems than turning back to addiction.

Experiential therapy includes many various forms, and can be divided into two main categories: outdoor experiential therapy and indoor experiential therapy. Both aim at physical and mental challenges in order to succeed. Equine therapy, which falls within the category of outdoor experiential therapy, is worth reviewing on its own due to its uniqueness and successful results. Research supports the use of experiential therapy, as motivation increases and social integration is easier through the experience of such therapy.

The great outdoors is well known for its healing abilities, and exercise in itself releases the same good-feeling endorphins as a high does. There we have it: the high that is healthy. Outdoor experiential therapy utilizes nature to help residents work through their problems and free themselves from dependency through the physical challenges offered in nature. Activities can include winter sports like snowshoeing, and summer sports like hiking. More radical activities, like a heli-experience, are also possible. The heli-experience takes people to literally previously unknown heights. In opening new worlds, these experiences reconnect residences to their world, which is so important to eventually helping them reconnect with the people who live in this world. While outdoor activities are beneficial for the social aspect of interacting with other residents, their main achievement is to make the resident introspect and put a perspective on the resident's own life in the context of the towering natural world.

Indoor experiential therapy can be based on an indoor ropes and challenge course. While also containing the aspect of physical challenge, indoor experiential therapy is a greater internal challenge.

## The Equine Cushings Cure

The resident must mentally prepare herself for the challenges that come at such heights. Also, trust is an invaluable lesson learned in indoor therapy. Partners rely on each other to succeed in these activities, thus learning to communicate effectively and learning to trust another. This can be an especially difficult aspect of healing from addiction, as for so many, trust is not a part of a life of addiction. Learning to rebuild personal self-confidence and trust in others is vital for a successful recovery from substance dependence. Reintegrating into society after therapy is one of the most difficult aspects of recovery, so having a treatment program that rebuilds the elements of trust and confidence, needed for a successful life in our society, is especially beneficial.

Equine therapy, a certain highlight of the outdoor experiential therapy, combines aspects used both in outdoor and indoor therapy. From the aspect of the outdoors, equine therapy offers the chance to be with, in and beyond nature, with a living being that sees us only for who we are. Horses are extremely intelligent creatures, having a special history with the human race. So vital in the development of the

modern world, horses were the first vehicles for transporting messengers and mail efficiently, as the Pony Express reminds us, and were man's trusted guides in exploration and on battlefields. And, while a horse does not judge mankind, it certainly can read a character and will cleverly use a human's personality to its advantage. Trust is an essential element of equine therapy, and it is a relationship with a creature that will not lie about its feelings. When a genuine friendship is formed between horse and man, it is a lifelong bond. Equine therapy combines the power of nature and a physical challenge with the need to build a trusting relationship with a fellow living creature and increase self-confidence. In this manner, equine therapy is especially helpful for residents of treatment centers, as it combines all elements so beneficial to recovery in one activity.

Experiential therapy teaches lessons of confidence in the self as well as in others, and teaches facing challenges and overcoming them. Motivation is of prime importance in overcoming an addiction, and what better place to find motivation than where we naturally seek it: in situations that encourage us to aim higher than we imagine is possible. Through the motivation that appears in the physical activities, treatment center residents learn to carry it over to their own lives, and find the necessary motivation to deal with personal issues. Simultaneously building confidence and trust in themselves and others only strengthens the desire for motivation. The added health benefits of partaking in physical exercise show themselves both on the bodies and minds of patients. Getting the body into shape helps stabilize the mind, and helps lead a generally healthier life. There is never an easy cure to addiction, and many paths and steps must be followed to guide to a better life. The step of experiential therapy is one of the most rewarding steps in treatment, as the treatment resident is aware first-hand of its results. This personal feeling of achievement in overcoming challenges makes great headway in the recovery process from addiction.

This article was written by Marina Petroni, sponsored by

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located in Sundance, Utah, is a world-class residential drug rehab facility providing a private, effective and serene pathway to sobriety. Reproductions of this article must include a link pointing back to

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