

Dehydration – The perfect solution

What causes dehydration?

Dehydration and its detrimental effects is the biggest killer of horses in the world today because they are notoriously difficult to voluntarily rehydrate, hence the old English saying “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink”. The saying is so old that has translated into “stubbornness” in today’s colloquial language.

The reason it is so difficult is because ‘thirst’ is a regulatory response caused primarily by a shift in concentrations of salts (or electrolytes) such as sodium, chloride and potassium in and around the cells of the body. This imbalance can be cause by a number of different reasons such as:

- Sweating
- Exercise
- Disease
- Pregnancy and lactation
- Excessive water loss or restricted water intake.

Why do some Horses not drink?

Basically, thirst is controlled by the body trying to restore the balance as the levels of fluid are strictly controlled in a process called homeostasis. For example, the landlord at the pub puts a bowl of salty peanuts on the bar. He puts them there to make you drink his beer, when you take in the extra salt it increases the concentration within your body. It is well know that “where ever salt goes water follows” therefore very soon afterwards you say to the barman “Can I have a pint please?”, the landlord is now happy ☺. However if the Landlord was to put a pint of water on the bar and made everyone drink it , they would not feel thirsty and not buy a drink, the landlord would be sad ☹.

So how do we get our horses to drink?

In essence the thirst mechanism is switched on and off to regulate fluid balance, however sometimes in horses this response is masked so even when the horse is clearly dehydrated it will still not voluntarily ingest water.

Traditional ways of trying to get water into horses such as flavoured water have been around for centuries, the main one being molasses which makes water sweet and palatable therefore more desirable, however this method still relies largely on the thirst

mechanism and the sugar can make them 'fizzy', or more recently veterinarians have had to administer fluids intravenously or via a nasogastric tube (stomach tube) which is not ideal, but if you could trick the horse into drinking then you could administer water whenever it was necessary by voluntary ingestion.

What happens if my horse does not drink enough?

More often than not horses will only drink enough to quench their thirst rather than to satisfy their metabolic fluid needs. This may not have a huge effect on a horse that is just out grazing, in no work and under no stress as they can obtain large amounts of water from pasture, however the modern horse is being asked to perform feats of extraordinary strength, agility and stamina and a lack of metabolic water can have a devastating effect on the horses body systems. If the horse does not have enough water in reserve, then the body will draw upon the blood supply. This increases the thickness of the blood causing the heart to have to work harder to pump the blood around. The lack of oxygen in the blood then causes the respiratory system to work harder to provide more oxygen which in turn causes more CO₂ to be produced causing fatigue and a loss of performance and in some severe cases can lead to sudden death.

What makes EquidGel unique?

EquidGel™ is a solution, when mixed with water it forms a gel which is actually a high fibre feed in the form of a drink. EquidGel™ is a totally natural, highly palatable Alfalfa based feed which is 85% fibre, with a high oil content for energy. Because it is a feed it appeals to the horse's very powerful instinct to forage which can override the thirst response in favour of food. So when you lead your horse to a bucket of EquidGel™ you can make him drink as much as you want.

How will EquidGel™ benefit my horse?

You can use EquidGel™ to hydrate your horse:

- Before, during and after travelling
- Before, during and after competing
- Working in hot temperatures
- Extra hydration for lactating mares
- Follow on 'liquid fibre' for weanling foals
- Pre and post operative hydration and nutrition

You can also use EquidGel™ as a daily feed for the following:



- Conditioning
- Dental issues
- Gastric Ulcers
- Rehabilitation
- And much more

EquidGel™ provides the natural solution whenever your horse needs to drink as it is the only feed that allows ingestion of large amounts of water to quench metabolic needs voluntarily, making it ideal for transporting horses, hydration whilst competing and to help regulate the digestive system. Because there is now a means of taking on fluid voluntarily, EquidGel™ has the potential to save the lives of horses across the world.