cure? treatment?



ORABIOTIC ENZISE OUNTMENT

s much as I love seeing the winter snow melt and the first few green hints of spring, one thing always starts to weigh heavy on my mind - the start of summer eczema season. For those of us who live in climates that are unlucky enough to have good conditions for summer eczema and have imported horses, we can count on about one third of them coming down with the affliction each and every summer. That means miserable, itchy horses and the shared sympathetic suffering of their owners and caretakers.

Over the years, we have tried just about every treatment there is for the nasty allergy - creams, lotions, sprays, blankets, and supplements - you name it. Some gave limited relief, but most were completely ineffective as a treatment but were effective in draining our bank account. Steroids worked great for a low price but had potentially harmful side effects. So when I heard that Frank K. Reilly, DVM, owner of Equine Medical and Surgical Associates, Inc. of West Chester, Pennsylvania, had developed a new program for the treatment of summer eczema I was skeptical – no, make that extremely skeptical.

However, after hearing lots of positive reports from Icelandic owners, my husband Steve spoke with Dr. Reilly's office manager, Cindy Zimmerman. We were intrigued enough to give it a try. As the plan we were using was only moderately effective, we had nothing to lose. To be fair, we committed to using the plan as directed for one full season. So, in the early spring of 2009 (well before the start of our summer eczema season), we placed our order and diligently read the instructions and other recommenda-

The program consists of the use of several of Dr. Reilly's products that should all be started well before the season starts (none contain steroids of any kind):

- The first is the SE Oral Supplement. This is a liquid supplement to add to the horse's feed twice a day. The supplement has USDA certified organic herbs that Dr. Reilly believes control the allergic reaction of the Culicoides bite. The herbs should decrease inflammation to allow healing and to stop the itch. The amount fed (20cc) is small. It needs to be refrigerated, but we did not find that to be a big deal. It contains no medications that would be prohibited in the show ring. It is also available in a sugar-free apple flavor for horses with Insulin Resistance or on controlled carbohydrate diets.
- The second is Dr. Reilly's Map Shampoo. This is a concentrated shampoo that gets mixed with water. The Map Shampoo is all natural and gently aids in healing. If your horse has active lesions, it should be used three days in a row and then two times a week until the skin is healed. Then it can be used as needed. (We found once a week worked for us.) Although the bottle is small because it is so concentrated, it lasts a long time.
- The third is the Quadrabiotic Enzyme Ointment. After using the Map Shampoo and drying the area, massaging red areas with a small amount of this special ointment sooths them. It also combats secondary bacterial infections so common with summer eczema lesions. It also helps stop the itch. As with the Map Shampoo, a little goes a long way.

♣ Lastly, there is the RKTopical SprayTM. This is a powerful spray that will repel and kill Culicoides, ticks, mosquitoes, and flies. This is what will prevent the Culicoides from biting the horse and causing the reaction in the first place. The spray lasts a full eight hours in sunlight and all night in darkness. No additional fly sprays are needed. The spray is a proprietary blend of Dr. Reilly's. It is even popular as a general fly spray for non-affected horses as it works so well at repelling all manner of bothersome insects.

In addition to the use of the products, Dr. Reilly also makes the following recommendations for treating horses with summer eczema (many of these will be familiar strategies):

FANS Culicoides are poor fliers. The use of fans in stables and run-in sheds can prevent the Culicoides from coming physically near the horse.

DAYTIME TURNOUT Culicoides feed at night but are at their worst at dawn and dusk. If possible, it is helpful to have the horse stabled at night with fans. However, if that is not possible, the RK Spray should be reapplied before dusk.

REMOVE STANDING WATER

Culicoides breed in standing water not running streams. Therefore, removing any stagnate water will cut down on the Culicoides population at your farm.

ADD OMEGA OILS TO FEED

Several years ago a Canadian study showed that these oils may help to decrease the allergic reaction to Culicoides exposure (two of our horses in fact participated in this study). Dr. Reilly recommends 30cc per horse per day of Wheat Germ Oil (not Wheat Germ Oil Blend that has corn oil added) as the most economic source. Flaxseed Oil is another excellent course but can be expensive. Another alternative is ground Flaxseed added to the feed.

DEWORMING Dr. Reilly recommends giving one tube of Equimax dewormer once a week for four weeks in a row as internal parasites rob the immune system of the horse.



typical signs of itching, often resulting in extreme hair loss and sometimes bleeding.



REGULAR BATHING Dr. Reilly recommends giving the horse a bath with regular shampoo two to three times a week. Why? Dr. Reilly believes that horse urine attracts flies over 30 times greater than other large animals. Therefore, exposure can be cut down by removing the attraction. This also includes hosing your horse off after rides. Once dried, the RK Spray should be applied.

In our case, we picked one heck of a season to give this new treatment a try. It was one of the wettest summers on record in our area. As much as we tried, as we always do, to cut down on any standing water, there were puddles in our pastures that lasted for months. We had never had a season with so many mosquitoes, Culicoides, and other insects.

We decided to try the program on our two horses that were affected by summer eczema. However, with a sudden warm spell in the spring one of the horses had an immediate horrible reaction, and we decided to remove him from our test and place him on steroids. He remained on a low dose of steroids for the rest of the season. This was unfortunate on the one hand — but on the bright side it did provide a good contrast subject to the other horse that we were testing the system on.

With our test horse we followed the program closely beginning before the start of the season. As for the other recommendations, we did not have fans in our stable. The horse was actually on mainly 24-hour turnout (because she was doing so well). She, like all our horses, received Glanzen 3 supplement

Equine Medical & Surgical Associates Inc. 325 Westtown Road, Suite 15 • West Chester, PA 19382 p. 610-436-5174 • f. 610-436-5183 • equimedsurg@aol.com http://equinemedsurg.com/index.html



Regular bathing and rinsing makes a big difference photo: Susan McWhinney

daily that contains ground Flaxseed. We did not change her deworming program. We did a lot of bathing and general hosing (almost everyday during the heat of the summer). She tolerated all the treatment well, and we saw no adverse reactions to it.

Of course the big question is — did it work? I can answer an honest yes! Was it a complete cure? No — but I think that's probably more than any of us can hope for. But for this horse it did allow her to enjoy the summer season outside for the most part (we did stable her when the conditions for Culicoides

were particularly high). She had few sores, greatly reduced itching and, in general, had a markedly better attitude. The program was easy to follow and to administer. As far as we could find, it had no side effects. I would definitely use it again and will this year. For those that have tried everything else, I would say this is definitely another treatment worth a good try.

After following the program for a year I would say the most important thing I learned was the importance of regular baths for these horses. That really seemed to make a huge difference. Even just rinsing with water was a big help. I think, in addition to Dr. Reilly's recommendations about removing urine, removing sweat and its residue with water is also important to keep the skin from getting irritated. It got to the point that when our horse saw us getting the hose out, she would come right in eager for her relaxing bath. I think it was like a spa treatment for her!

It is also good to mention that in comparison to several other treatments I tried, I did not find Dr. Reilly's program to be outrageously expensive. Many of the products are available as refills (so you don't have to purchase the bottles all over again). Also, as I mentioned before, you will not need to purchase any additional fly spray. To have a horse that does not suffer — well, in my opinion, that's just priceless. *