THE MYTHS AND FEARS ABOUT SOY

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There has always been a lot of debate around the subject of soy and whether it is a valuable nutrient source for people and animals alike. There are several components in most plant material called 'anti-nutrients', these are components which are found to be not beneficial to the nutritional content of the food. Many of these include, oxalates, tannins, trypsin inhibitors and so-forth. These components can be found in everything from tea to chickpeas to spinach. Soy in all its forms contains some degree of trypsin inhibitor, which is an anti-nutrient. What is trypsin and why is it important? Trypsin is an enzyme produced by the pancreas to assist in breakdown of proteins. Does this mean all soy is bad? No, not at all, it is just important to be mindful of these levels. When we look at the content of trypsin inhibitors in various soy products; full fat, dehulled soy flour was found to only contain 2.9mg/g in comparison to 19.4mg/g which is found in conventional soybeans with hulls. These figures alone suggest that majority of trypsin inhibitors come from the soy-hulls. We always recommend avoiding using soy-hulls, to reduce the impact of anti-nutritional factors.

Another point of soy which is highly debated is the 'phyto-oestrogen' content otherwise known as isoflavones. Although people often forget these are plant-oestrogens, not mammalian oestradiol which acts differently in mammalian bodies. Human and animal studies have found isoflavones seen in soy can bind to oestrogen receptors and block actual oestrogen from binding to the site and taking effect. This has found to be beneficial in reducing oestrogen driven cancers such as prostate and breast cancer, maintenance of bone mass and protection against cardiovascular disease.

There are other aspects of soy which may be of concern. Being one of the most highly genetically modified (GM) and chemically treated plants; soy has been genetically modified to be resistant to large levels of glyphosate (a commonly used carcinogenic pesticide). Studies have found there to be residual glyphosates from 5-15mg/kg of harvested GM soy. This would be the only link soy has with cancer given the carcinogenic nature of glyphosates. We always recommend to source certified organic soy products and GMO free, this will eliminate these problems and potential disease progression.

When choosing any feed or supplement for your horse it is important to not only look at these factors but also whether the supplement suitable for the species. A plant source of protein and fat is essential for the health of the horse. However, there are many animal and dairy derived ingredients on the market, which are not suitable for a horses' digestive tract.

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