



The Cautionary Tale of Farmer Van Winkle

Submitted by Cada McCoy

Once upon a time...just a mere 50 years ago, when he fell soundly asleep, farmer Rip Van Winkle had a healthy herd of a dozen horses. Based on his knowledge and experience, he successfully fed them all a diet of oats and alfalfa, and they grazed on his many acres of green grass, drinking from the clear stream that fed the pond at the bottom of the hill. Old Mr. Van Winkle had never met an equine vet or heard of such diseases as Cushings, Insulin Resistance or Equine Metabolic Disorder. Although generations of 'possums



lived in the nearby woods, not one of his healthy horses ever showed symptoms of EPM.

But, farmer Van Winkle fell into a deep sleep, and while he napped, the world changed. Industrialization and its repercussions, including increased environmental pollution and new laws allowing the release of by-products of these new industries into the ground, water and air, had altered everything Mr. Van Winkle knew to be true about feeding and caring for his livestock.

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When he stretched and opened his eyes, he awoke to today's new world of bodies that could no longer assimilate and use the old feeds he had once relied upon. His horses no longer could safely graze in his pastures or drink from his pond. He was amazed to find stores filled with bags of heavily contaminated and laxly regulated commercial feed products that claimed to fix all the ailments that were now plaguing his once healthy animals. He noted three equine veterinarians in his neighborhood, each one specializing in particular diseases that were unheard of when he began to snore those few decades ago. Even that harmless little 'possum family was getting the blame for equine neurological disorders! Everything he thought he knew about what was right and correct had been turned upside down.

He was very, very puzzled, because, when he looked about, the sky was still blue, the air was still clear, the grass was still green and the rain still fell softly into the creek that babbled down to his pond. Nothing around him looked very different; so, why were his horses now sick and dying from diseases with names he couldn't even pronounce?

Are we like farmer Van Winkle? Have we been asleep while the world has been changing? Just because we can't see what is different, do we understand, from observing the mystifying changes in our animals over the past half-century, that something truly must be different?

Farmer Van Winkle is sorely tempted to go back to sleep and let the "experts" in this new world treat every syndrome and symptom they have identified as now afflicting his once healthy horses. However, if he is willing to wake up and acknowledge the real cause of his horses' new ailments, he'll be able to reverse many, if not all, of their metabolic problems.

Unfortunately, this is not a fairy tale. However, there IS a path that will lead us all safely through this very different world that we, and our horses, live in today. The fairy godmother's magic wand is just a simple nutritional program that recognizes that Mr. Van Winkle's (and our) horses are different animals with different needs in a very different world today.

And, best of all, when we follow this path, our horses will live happily ever after.

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