

Equine Cushingoid Disease or Cushing's Syndrome

Also known as Hirsutism (Long Hair Syndrome)

This syndrome maybe caused by a tumor of the pituitary gland, which regulates the level of hormones. New studies are more apt to call Cushing's a metabolic illness. If you wait to start treatment until all or many of the symptoms have appeared, your chances of helping your horse to live a longer life maybe lessened. Any of the following may appear in no particular order:

1. Longer hair than normal, to 5 or 6 inches long.
2. Excessive urination and excessive water intake.
3. Overweight. (Long-term diet does not help.)
4. Underweight (Long-term increase in feed does not seem to help.)
5. Unexplainable founder.
6. Breathing difficulties at certain times of the year.
7. Hair is curly when wet, or when it gets long.
8. Lack of energy.
9. Skin may be dry and scaly, or slightly greasy.
10. Horse may be occasionally drenched in sweat.
11. Prone to infections.

Some veterinarians seem to be reluctant to diagnose Cushing's syndrome or to test for it. Any unexplained founder would warrant the testing. Any two of the above could indicate the start of this devastating illness. There is a newer test called ACTH and insulin. This is the only test you want to have done on your horse.

HPS tried two different recommended medications with our Cushing's horse Cheyenne. The first one caused him to founder almost the first day. The next one we used for a year. The dosage was increased several times until he was being given 100mg of Permax everyday. These medications were just to treat symptoms, and not meant to cure the illness. We researched for the strongest antioxidant and came up with Grape seed extract powder.

Cheyenne was one of the types of horses that were extremely heavy, 15 hands and over 1,400 pounds. We weaned him off his Permax, added magnesium and Grape seed extract to his feed. He is given 1/16 of a teaspoon per day in his feed. For the first time in years, Cheyenne is running, his coat is not as long and shaggy. He has lost weight and has not had a return of the founder and there have been no infections.

You can order the extract from UCKELE Health www.uckele.com The Grape seed extract is good for all cancers. Please follow your veterinarian's instructions for additional care for any illness.

Cheyenne was our first Cushing's horse, since then we have had many more and have added to our care of them. Many horses are also IR (Insulin Resistant) and diet will be very important. The horse will need to be taken off of all carbohydrates (grains) and sugar. No carrots and no apples.... Each person has to try what will work for their horse. Purina's Born Free supplement may help to balance the vitamins and minerals. Soaked alfalfa cubes or alfalfa pellets as the base feed may help. Some horses that need weight, we add Rice Bran.

Most Cushing's horses die from a secondary infection. Supporting their immune system with good nutrition is very important. The Cushing's horse can live a long and useful life if cared for correctly.