



Ranvet

HORSING AROUND

FEEDING THE GERIATRIC HORSE - *THE TWILIGHT YEARS*

According to the National Research Council (NRC), a horse is considered geriatric at the age of 20. However, generally a horse is considered a senior horse from 15-16 years of age. The twilight years need not be fraught with concern, as with the correct dentition, awareness of digestive efficiency and immune function impairment in addition to implementing preventative degenerative joint disease/arthritis methods, mature horses can live happily with the right care and attention until a very old age, some well after the age of 30. **Here is how nutrition can help...**

CHEWING THE FAT...

Impaired chewing ability due to loss of teeth or poor tooth condition is the primary concern associated with old age. Older horses have a decreased ability to efficiently grind feed down in to small enough pieces to swallow comfortably which may lead to inefficient digestion and reduced nutrient extraction.

**Remember
to have teeth
checked every
6 months.**

Partially digested food which manages to progress through the digestive system may result in blockages causing colic. Poor dentition may also mean that it is physically painful for the horse to chew any feedstuffs. This is likely to reduce the horse's appetite causing the horse to lose weight and condition.

IMMUNITY...

Immune function: Protects against parasites, bacteria, virus particles and even cancer cells.

- ➔ **Immunity decreases in older horses.**
- ➔ **Reduced nutrient absorption may result in a loss of condition.**
- ➔ **Can cause rapid weight loss.**
- ➔ **More susceptible to viral insult ie; Equine Influenza.**
- ➔ **Most horses carry a worm burden however this is more prevalent in the older horse.**



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Did you know???

- **Older horses will become less dominant and can often become fussy eaters.**
- **20 years onwards, a horse is labeled geriatric as its metabolism and organs have started slowing significantly.**
- **Some horses seem to age earlier, others later. The horse will age differently depending on the breed and lifestyle.**

SCIENCE

INNOVATION

EXCELLENCE

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE IMMUNE PROTECTION FOR YOUR HORSE??

By providing a boost to the overall immune system with daily supplementation of a high quality vitamin and mineral supplement, such as Ranvet's **Ration Balancer**[®]. Essential minerals and nutrients support and strengthen the immune system, many of which have potent beneficial anti-oxidant effects in addition to properties which assist the body in fighting infection and other immune system insults.



Additionally, vaccines are designed based on the specific nature of an antibody response to an antigen. In other words, the antibody will work only against the antigen that stimulated its production. A "booster" creates more antibodies, a quicker response, and longer protection. Ensure vaccination schedules are up to date in addition to implementing an effective de-worming routine making sure to alternate active ingredients.

ARTHRITIS / DEGENERATIVE JOINT DISEASE

Due to normal wear and tear, cartilage begins to breakdown. As joint cartilage degrades, production of synovial fluid is reduced resulting in loss of joint lubrication.

In the final stages, if left unchecked, arthritis can cause the permanent fusing of equine joints.



PREVENTION

- ✓ **Sufficient warm up.**
- ✓ **A glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate supplement may assist in improvement of joint health and function.**
- ✓ **Ice therapy reduces swelling.**
- ✓ **Bute may reduce inflammation and pain. (consult your vet before use)**



ALLOW AN OLD HORSE TO THRIVE...

- * **Feed an easily digested feed like an extruded ration; Boiled/micronised/extruded barley and use a soft, leafy forage.**
- * **Supply a good level of quality proteins.**
- * **Supply a ready source of energy.**
- * **Offer a palatable feed.**
- * **Consider feeds which contain yeast culture.**
- * **Provide a quality vitamin and mineral supplement.**
- * **Act quickly on evidence of changes in condition and behaviour.**



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**NEXT MONTH;
Defining and applying cool feeds**

Ranvet's Nutritional Consultation Service for your horse's every need;

- **Customised diets**
- **Vitamin & electrolyte requirement**
- **Correcting metabolic disturbance**
- **Energetic demands**
- **Growth & development needs**

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