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Middletown Horse and Rider Hosts Healthy Horse Seminar with Gabriele Sutton

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NY Equestrian Examiner

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Gabriele Sutton takes some time to evaluate horses.
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Slideshow: Horse & Rider Host Horse Health Seminar

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Middletown, NY was the site of this week's travels to a Gabriele Sutton clinic hosted by Horse and Rider Tack Shop, owned by Kristina Baumann and Debbie Shearer (www.horsenridertack.com). A healthy horse was the focus of this day and over 60 curious local folk attentively listened while they learned about how to best care for their horses if they want them to enjoy a life of health.

The day began at WTbQ radio station for the weekly "Horse Talk" program where Peter Cashman and Chip Watson chatted with Gabriele for an hour. Horse Talk has been running for some eight years now every Saturday morning and best of all you can hear it streamed near or far at www.wtbq.com. They pride themselves on bringing the horse news happening in their community to their listeners. If it has to do with horses, it's being talked about on Horse Talk.

Listening to the show gave me a chance to find out just how Gabriele came about getting involved as a nutritionist for horses.

"I was a riding German girl all my life and then fell in love with a Canadian and never left Canada," she explained. "We had three daughters who got involved with horses and one day one of the horses got sick and being a Naturopath for

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humans I got interested in transferring that education to horses. “

Gabriele decided to learn how to keep their horses healthy by balancing their feeding program with supplements and vitamins. Horses were a natural fit for her and so she researched and talked to anyone who she felt could help educate her about horses and nutrition.

As Gabriele put it, “If you want to talk to someone about how to do something, you have to be doing it.” Her time spent around horses, her research and her knowledge of nutrition helped her to understand how to restore or maintain a horse’s health.

Gabriele’s nutrition clinic was a mixture of knowledge and fun, just enough to keep the crowd attentive for the entire two hours. Throughout the presentation she would combine knowledge with anecdotes. For instance, when dealing with a horse’s health you need to take slow steps. “You wouldn’t say one day that you are going to do dressage and decide to skip walking and start with the passage,” she explained.

For Gabriele, by educating this group of people to understand proper nutrition it was only going to be better for their horses. “If you are knowledgeable, you are empowered and you will have vibrant, healthy, sound, happy and not mad horses who do what they have to do. It is never too late to make some changes.”

Gabriele went on to explain that there are three classes of horses in North America: A, B and C.

“C is for Mustangs,” she explained. “They need to walk 18 hours in the desert and they need to eat whatever they can find. If you try to confine those horses they will suffer.”

She continued noting that, “The A horses are the hard keepers. That’s the horse that ends up losing weight and when he goes to a horse show he’ll lose 100 pounds. These horses have a high metabolism and short coat and do not grow a thick winter coat. These horses are also the ones that are genetically predisposed to have ulcers, colic, and osteoarthritic problems. This is the description of a Thoroughbred.”

The B horses are “all of the others,” she continued. “They are your easy keepers; the ones who walk beside the feed room and gain weight by just looking at it. They grow a winter coat and have fatty deposits on the base of the neck. And they have the J-Lo butt,” she jokingly added. “They have reoccurring tendon and ligament suspensory problems,” she noted in a more serious tone.

Gabriele explained that most horses have laminitic changes 8-15 times before laminitis actually shows up. And often this happens in the purebreds. She added with a smile that “Mutts are often good to go!

“Commonsense will tell you that the A horse should not be fed the same as the B horse,” she continued and she

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explained that "horses are designed to go and walk and eat different things, not to be confined in stalls."

Gabriele then asked those in attendance if they are asking themselves the following questions:

"What kind of horse do I have?"

"What am I going to do with the horse (petting him in the pasture or working the horse everyday)?"

"Am I going to stress that horse?"

"Do I need to worry about regulations (what will show on a drug test)?"

"What kind of breed do I have?"

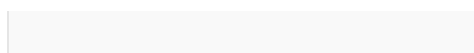
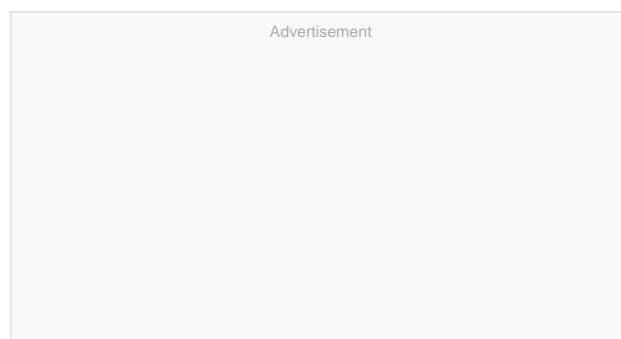
"What kind of issues do I have (not supple, he can't bend)?"

"What geographic region do I live in?"

Once you ask and answer the above questions you then can have a sense of how to feed and maintain your horse.

She began by also making sure everyone understood the importance of good dental care. "Without it would be like trying to skate without skates. No sense talking about nutrition if you don't get your teeth floated."

She also clarified that the digestion of food does not happen in the stomach; instead that is where the food is broken down. Grain is digested in the small intestine.




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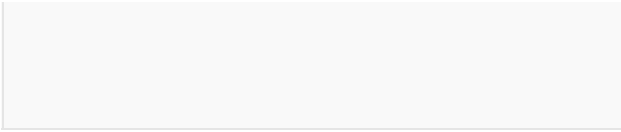
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She further explained that by feeding horses two big meals a day instead of allowing them to graze means we are overloading their stomach in the morning and at night. She added that 85% of the horse's immune system is surrounded by the intestines. And that the horse's engine of the body is the endocrine system.

When the topic of fat came up she emphasized that you should not be feeding your horses corn, vegetable or canola oil. "When you look at fat you are looking at omega factors and transition time; how long does it take for the fat to go from here to out there? Virgin oils are what you should be giving your horse and best among them is coconut oil, but care must be taken because it gives them immediate energy. And again Gabriele added an anecdote, "If you are already being bucked off, coconut oil may not be the right thing."

Gabriele is a big supporter of both Beet Pulp and Flax Seed Oil, but emphasized that both must be soaked until all the water they will absorb is absorbed. Generally, one cup of flax needs three cups of water. She talked about Amanda McNally from Emerald Valley who was also there showcasing her products and giving samples of Speedi-Beet, to anyone who wanted one. Before you feed beet pulp to horses you must spend hours upon hours soaking it but with Speedi-Beet it only takes ten minutes and so this has become a welcome source to many horse owners. "Beet Pulp is great for roughage, inexpensive to obtain, has a one-to-one calcium ratio. It safe as is but it needs to be soaked."

When the topic of bran mashes came up, Gabriele immediately informed those in attendance that feeding this to our horses is a big mistake, explaining that horses can't digest wheat. If you do give a bran mash, "you must go in there with a prebiotic afterwards." She suggested flax. When asked about the safety of flax seeds she added, "There is more poison in the core of an apple than there is in six cups of flax seed. This is a good way of getting a multi vitamin into the horses and a great way of offering an essential fatty acid to the horse. Rice bran is also good for putting weight on a horse but it's also important to exercise the horse."

Gabriele is opposed to feeding soy bean oil, but explained that it is often used as a protein filler because it is inexpensive. "Woman take soy for hormones. It manipulates estrogen metabolism. I don't recommend feeding soy to mares," she explained.

When the audience heard that horses need to be fed "18,000 to 22,000 calories a day and that 90% should be roughage (pasture/hay)," you could hear an audible surprised sound from the audience. However, each slice of hay has a lot of calories so this is not as much as you would think. Gabriele is in favor of having hay in front of horses at all times and suggests four feedings a day and explained that one of those

feedings should be a 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. night feeding, because it's too long for them to have to wait for their next feeding if the last one is around 4:00 or 5:00.

She further explained that you have to be careful feeding grass to horses because of the fructan, which is digested in the small intestine and therefore has an immediate effect on the horse's blood sugar level and can be dangerous to a horse.

Alfalfa was another topic discussed noting that it's never good to feed straight alfalfa to a horse. "Alfalfa is for cattle not horses – it is way too rich. The good thing about alfalfa is it has no fructan and so therefore good for any EMS horse. The best hay for a horse is a mixture of timothy (70%) and alfalfa (30%) blend if you work that horse."

She concluded her presentation noting that it's important to support your horse with good basics and that supplements are designed to make a correction in the program and to balance the feed program. Gabriele's company, KAM Animal Services (www.kamanimalservices.com) focuses on supplements that are GMO free. When combined some of her products are used for restoring a healthy gut because when the gut is healthy everything else falls into place.

Those in attendance were given the opportunity to invite Gabriele out to evaluate their horses. So, after the seminar was over I joined Gabriele and watched as she looked at six different horses. Just watching her show each owner how the exterior of the horse speaks volumes about what is going on inside was an education for all of us. Many started on a gut program which involves giving a variety of products to the horse, tape measuring them every ten days and keeping in touch with Gabriele to explain how things are going. In eight weeks she will return to check on those horses herself to ensure everything is improving as it should be.

It was an amazing day for me as I learned about the value of beet pulp, flax, improving the gut and so much more.



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