

# **Robert McDowell's Herbal Treatments**

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## **A Herbalists View of Vitamin and Mineral Supplements for Horses:**

Most Horse Owners and Trainers nowadays give Vitamins and Minerals to Horses as part of their daily Program.

Since the discovery of Vitamin C and its link with the disease Scurvy explained, we are accustomed to being told by the media and by health authorities that our health will be improved if we take additional Vitamin and Mineral supplements in addition to our normal diets.

We are told that it is something about the modern lifestyle, stress and the denaturing of our soils etc. which means that our food supply is not as good as it was in the "old days". This is of course true to some extent and we should be doing much more about the quality of our food. We should really be working much harder on Organic and Chemical Free farming than we are doing but until the market provides a greater incentive for so doing, this movement will be slow.

As usual of course, this is not the whole truth.

Modern diets (although maybe poorer in quality than an ideal medieval diet for example) is vastly better in regard to the variety of food available. Also, although the subsistence farmer had organic food, often seasonally he suffered severe shortages, storage problems and malnutrition. Scurvy was found to occur in Cities as well as on Sailing Ships, the poor suffered dreadfully in the cities and even amongst the wealthy, poor dietary habits caused severe health problems. This is to say nothing about medicine which often consisted of poisonous substances like Mercury, Arsenic and Opium which did nothing much for the health of the population either.

Vitamin and Mineral Supplements became such a lucrative market in human nutrition that it was quickly taken up by the Animal Feed and Veterinary Supply Industries and now there are a wide range of products marketed especially for horses. Some are harmless, some are detrimental to health and most are a waste of money.

Let us consider some of the Vitamins and Minerals one at a time.

**Vitamin A:** Is found in Carrots and Leafy Green Vegetables and is therefore much better supplied in feed, rather than in processed supplements.

**Vitamin B:** Is found in all grains and the idea of giving Vitamin B supplements to animals which have grain in their diet is complete nonsense. Vitamin B12 is a little harder to get and is best found in the herb Comfrey which can be offered OCASIONALLY AND IN SMALL QUANTITIES and in these doses is a valuable supplement.

**Bioflavonoids:** Can be supplied with a little Buckwheat to provide for Rutin especially for healthy blood vessels.

**Vitamin C:** Is found in fresh greens in abundance and it is a poor horse which has no access to green pick. If a horse is kept away from greens for a time half a cup of whole dried Rosehips in boiling water and allowed to cool will provide all Vitamin C and Iron that is missing.

**Choline:** Is found in bitter vegetables and the leaves of Dandelions and a few fresh leaves can be offered a stabled horse from time to time. Otherwise let a few dandelions grow around the yard and the Horse will chose them for itself.

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**Vitamin D:** Is synthesized by the action of Sunlight on Skin and found in Fish Oils. Not needed as a supplement for grazing animals.

**Vitamin E:** Is found in fresh wheat germ along with the whole range of Vitamin B's and is the commercial source of both E's and B's. A little fresh wheat germ for those horses not on grains is all that is required. Anything more expensive or more processed is a nonsense.

**Calcium:** Is found in Leafy Greens and in Molasses (along with Sulfur)

**Iron:** Is found in Wheat Germ, in Green Feed and in Molasses.

**Silica:** Is found in Dried Feed in abundance.

**Trace Elements:** Are all found in Kelp.

It all boils down to Grains, Green Feed, Wheat Germ, Molasses, Carrots and Kelp. To this I would add Garlic as a protection against infection and access to the odd weed like Dandelion and Comfrey.

All the rest is marketing hype.

Robert McDowell  
Herbalist.  
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