Hyaluronan… Hyaluronic Acid… Sodium Hyaluronate… HA… As horse owners, you’d have to have been excommunicated from society over the last decade not to have been blanketed with media touting the benefits of HA for your horse’s joints. As an oral supplement, HA was catapulted from obscurity to mainstream popularity in 2002 when ABC News aired a segment that attributed anti-aging effects to dietary HA. Today, you can walk into your local drug/grocery store and find endless options of oral HA supplements available for purchase – capsules, pills, powders, liquids, gummies, and on and on. Of course it doesn’t end there; try looking at the facial cleansers, skin treatments, lotions and shampoos, you’ll find HA there too. Clearly, the American public has embraced the benefits of HA across many different platforms. Demand increases supply. But, “the supply of what HA?” is the question consumers really need to be asking if they what to reap the benefits.

HA is found everywhere in the body, but has an especially important role in the joints as the primary agent responsible for the viscosity and lubricating properties of synovial fluid. There are three major types of commercially available HA materials used in supplements. The chart below lists the types and basic attributes.
Hyaluronan Materials Used in Supplements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HA Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Molecular Weight (daltons)</th>
<th>Purity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hydrolyzed cartilage</td>
<td>chicken sternum cartilage</td>
<td>50-10,000</td>
<td>~10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rooster comb</td>
<td>chicken comb</td>
<td>50,000-200,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sodium hyaluronate</td>
<td>microbial fermentation</td>
<td>700,000-1 million or higher</td>
<td>90+%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You don't have to be a biochemist to see the obvious differences between each type of HA, yet ALL are labeled identically as Hyaluronic Acid or Sodium Hyaluronate on supplement product labels. Only one type of HA matches what is present in the body – high molecular weight, purified (protein-free) HA. The other two major types of HA materials have lower molecular weights. Published scientific studies have demonstrated HA with molecular weights of less than 500,000 daltons exhibit decreased viscosity and lubricating properties in solution.

Of course, one prerequisite for any beneficial effects from HA in oral supplement products is absorption into the bloodstream and joint tissues after intake. Again, only one form of HA – purified, high molecular weight HA from microbial fermentation – has published evidence for oral uptake and distribution to connective tissues.

Take home message: **Make sure you're getting the Real HA.** Simply increasing the volume of the wrong concentration of an ingredient doesn't produce the desired effect – 2 cups of skim milk can’t replace ½ cup of heavy cream. Similarly, an equine joint supplement containing 500mg/oz of HA sourced from hydrolyzed cartilage is not going to provide the same proven benefits from a joint supplement providing 100mg/oz of HA sourced from sodium hyaluronate through microbial fermentation. Keep in mind both labels will just list Hyaluronic Acid or Sodium Hyaluronate. If you want to know the source of HA you're more than likely going to have to do some homework and don’t be surprised if that involves a domino effect of phone calls – we get it from this company – who gets it from this company – who imports it from this company – who you can’t even find a phone number for…

If you want to learn more about the benefits of HA check out the articles referenced at the end of this feature.

If you want to skip the homework and know where you can find an equine joint supplement providing a purified, high molecular weight HA from microbial fermentation, you’re in luck! It’s practically in your backyard.

Hagyard Flex-tra HA is an equine joint supplement containing the patented MHB3 bioactive Hyaluronan to provide horse owners and trainers an easy and effective way to administer this valuable biological compound. This formulation of HA is optimized for oral administration with most absorption occurring in the mouth and esophageal tissues before reaching the stomach. MHB3 Hyaluronan is made from the highest quality ingredients and contains no animal by-products and no Chinese ingredients. Flex-tra HA delivers the highest concentration (240mg/oz) of Hyaluronan available. And it’s a "Kentucky Proud" product being produced locally here within our state.

[Click here to purchase Flex-tra HA.](#)

[Click here to see our July specials.](#)

[For more information on HA and reference articles please click here.](#)