

Are there any supplements or treatments to prevent bleeding in racehorses?

Bleeding in racehorses is a term used by horsemen to describe Exercise-Induced Pulmonary Hemorrhage (EIPH). EIPH is hemorrhaging that originates from small pulmonary vessels associated with strenuous exercise.

The development of effective therapies for EIPH has been difficult given the various factors that can cause a horse to develop EIPH, including airway obstruction, existing airway inflammation, increased vascular pressure in the lungs, and cardiac arrhythmias.

Currently, furosemide (Salix) is the only race-day medication approved in all racing jurisdictions in the U.S. Furosemide has been shown in many peer-reviewed manuscripts to be effective in either eliminating or reducing the severity of EIPH.

Some alternative treatments that have scientific evidence to support their use to prevent or treat EIPH include nasal dilators, a diet rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, and rest. While there are numerous herbal supplements that are available for the treatment of EIPH, few if any have shown consistent efficacy in treating the condition.

Flair™ Nasal strips have been developed to prevent or reduce the collapse of the nasal pas-

sages, decrease upper-airway resistance, and reduce the pressures that the lung sustains during intense exercise.

At both Kansas State University's and Michigan State University's veterinary schools, researchers noted decreased airway resistance and a reduction in EIPH. One group of researchers at Calder Race Course observed that horses with the strip had a win percentage 3.4% higher than horses that did not wear the strip.

Diets rich in Omega-3 fatty acids such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic (DHA) that are fed to horses for four weeks have been noted to decrease red-blood-cell fluidity. In preliminary research at Kansas State, horses fed a diet enriched with both DHA and EPA showed a reduction in EIPH.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is another form of treatment that has shown some promise for the treatment of EIPH. More scientific research is needed in this field, however, to help support its efficacy.

While there are many over-the-counter herbal products that "guarantee" to reduce EIPH, we must be prudent and demand scientific-based evidence before we invest in those products.



Nathan Marc Slovis, D.V.M.

nslovis@hagyard.com

Nathan Slovis, D.V.M., is the director of the McGee Medical and Critical Care Center at the Hagyard Equine Medical Institute in Lexington. He is a native of Annapolis, Maryland. Slovis received his Bachelor of Science from Radford University, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Purdue University, interned at Arizona Equine Center, and completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of California-Davis. Slovis has published articles in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine*, *Equine Veterinary Journal*, and *Clinical Techniques in Equine Practice*. He also implemented the current Infectious Disease and Equine Emergency Response Programs at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute and holds the position of Infectious Disease Officer and Equine Emergency Response Director.

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A small image of a horse running, likely a racehorse, in a blue and white striped shirt. The image is partially obscured by the 'Great Savings!' text.