

MID-HUDSON VETERINARY PRACTICE, P.C.

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Happy New Year !!!

With the cold weather upon us and the holidays behind us, allergy season is the LAST thing on our minds. Few horse owners realize that January and February are the months to think about prevention. The northeast corner of the U.S. is well-known for its high concentration of allergens – tree, weed, and grass pollens, molds, and biting insects, all complicated by smog and humidity. Allergies in horses can appear in a broad array of symptoms from hives on the skin and itching, to poor performance and respiratory distress (“heaves” or COPD); and can enter the body via the respiratory tract (inhaled allergens), the gastrointestinal tract (ingested allergens), and the skin (by direct contact).

* Insect-related allergies will be discussed in the February newsletter.

Pollen-related allergies affect horses in a number of ways, mostly appearing as skin eruptions called “hives” or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease called COPD (or “heaves”). “Heavey” horses have an increased respiratory rate, often using the abdominal muscles to help move air with nostrils flared, and can be underweight due to the extra exertion.

Management tips:

- Keep these horses outside as often as possible.
- Wet the hay thoroughly prior to feeding to control hay dust.
- Spray newly bedded stalls with a fine mist of water to control shavings dust.



Medical treatments for these horses include anti-histamines to control the allergic response, bronchodilators to help open the airways, and (in worst cases) antibiotics and corticosteroids.

Allergy testing is available for horses and can help isolate allergic triggers so that they can be avoided in the stable environment. A simple blood specimen is tested for levels of allergic antibodies to weeds, molds, fungi, tree and grass pollens, mites, insects, and feed contents. Allergy injections can then be custom-made to desensitize the equine patient. Horses tolerate the injections well and owners find them easy to administer; and they are shown to help in over 60% of cases.

Call us for more information on managing your allergic horse!

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