

Therapeutic Steroid Use Distinct from Anabolic Steroids

by: Edited Press Release

October 20 2008 Article # 12931

With the work and stress put on the legs of every equine athlete, across disciplines, it's no surprise that joint inflammation is a common problem among working horses. Fortunately, intra-articular corticosteroids provide veterinarians with a long-proven aid for reducing inflammation in damaged joints. The hallmark of judicious use of these therapeutic tools is to give the horse the lowest dose that will achieve clinical results.

Regrettably, beneficial, therapeutic steroids--such as intra-articular corticosteroids--have received undeserved bad press due to the media attention given to anabolic steroids in human athletes. These anabolic, or androgenic, steroids are used to build muscle and have been abused in some circles by those attempting to enhance athletic performance. By contrast, intra-articular corticosteroids are used throughout the medical world to help alleviate swelling and inflammation--often with dramatic results.

[Read more about the differences between corticosteroids and anabolic steroids.](#)

"Corticosteroids are among the best tools we, as equine veterinary practitioners, have to reduce inflammation in horses' joints," said John Donecker, VMD, senior veterinarian at Pfizer Animal Health. "Like any other therapeutic method, use of corticosteroids should be carefully monitored as part of an overall recuperation program for the affected horse."

When considering the use of equine intra-articular corticosteroid therapy, veterinarians must carefully evaluate the amount of swelling present in the joint. Research evidence suggests that corticosteroids might have detrimental effects when given at overly high doses, when given repeatedly, or when administered to joints where inflammation is not occurring.

Moreover, there might be a temptation among horse owners to put a horse back to work rather quickly once the effects of the steroid therapy are seen. This is a mistake, however, as overly vigorous exercise or returning to work prematurely can defeat the purpose of the original treatment. In fact, proper rest following injury and treatment may allow the joint's own healing abilities to return to normal and the joint lubrication--called synovial fluid--to reacquire its former viscosity.

For information on Pfizer Animal Health's portfolio of equine products, visit PfizerAH.com.

Readers are cautioned to seek the advice of a qualified veterinarian before proceeding with any diagnosis, treatment, or therapy.



Copyright © 2008 BLOOD-HORSE PUBLICATIONS. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without written permission of BLOOD-HORSE PUBLICATIONS is prohibited. THE HORSE, THE HORSE logo, THEHORSE.COM and THEHORSE.COM logo are trademarks of BLOOD-HORSE PUBLICATIONS.