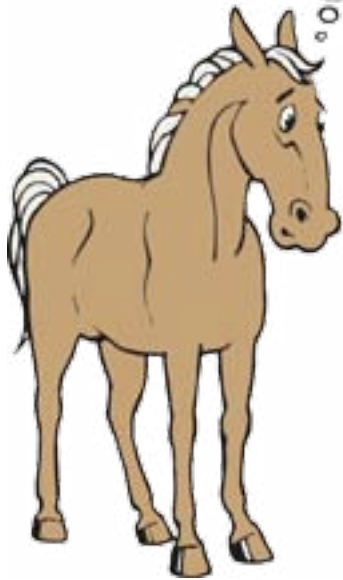


# Horses are herbivores, aren't they?



by Angela Davson - The Horse Herbalist

## THE DEFINITION OF A HERBIVORE IS:

*An animal that only eats vegetation, such as grasses, fruits, leaves, vegetables, roots and bulbs. Herbivores only eat things that need photosynthesis to live.*

So, if this is how horses are 'designed by nature' then should we be asking the question of why we are feeding products and supplements that go against the 'Law of Nature'?

The horse's body is designed to eat plant material only. The herbivore species have flat grinding teeth and a very long digestive system specifically designed to break down tough cellulose fibre in plants. Horses have jaws that move sideways,

enabling grinding of plant material in the mouth cavity where digestion begins. Once the food is chewed, reduced in bulk and thoroughly mixed with saliva it is swallowed, then travels down the oesophagus - a muscular tube approximately 1.2 to 1.5 metres in length - and to the stomach. No digestion actually takes place in the oesophagus.

## HORSES AND FAT

Horses' digestive systems are ill equipped to cope with large amounts of fat that are sometimes introduced to their diets by the well-meaning owner.

Long-term studies have shown this may cause duodenal reflux, this is where caustic bile in the small intestine back splashes into the stomach, triggering ulcers.

Herbivores only eat things that need photosynthesis to live. This excludes fish, sharks, cows, shell fish and products made from them.

A study in the U.S on human dietary fish oil supplements containing beneficial Omega-3 fatty acids was found to contain more than 30 different fatty acids, including 10 - 14 different saturated fats.

*Continued*

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## Horses are herbivours continued...

Oxidisation in the leading fish oil dietary supplements exceeded maximum levels established by the International Standards of Quality, which indicates that the levels of saturated fats and oxidised Omega-3 fatty acids may interfere with their intended/potential biological effects.

This study is raising question marks for the human population - whose gut is set up to be able to metabolise far more fat, be it saturated or unsaturated, than the horse's system, which isn't equipped to deal with fats or animal products.

## Horses may eat animal products occasionally due to nutritional stress or lack of any other feed.

However, most equine supplements on the commercial market containing animal material are well disguised to ensure horses find them palatable. They can be inadvertently disguised on the ingredients label also. After all, how many people could be expected to know that chondroitin and glucosamine are natural compounds found in the cartilage, trachea or tails of animals such as cows, pigs, sharks or shellfish. Plant based glucosamine is not so readily available.

If your horse sifts out some of these products or won't eat their feed, then take the hint - don't feed it.



*Using supplements to relieve inflammation and pain and to enhance the quality of life of the older horses is an option, as long-term negative effects don't apply.*

It seems that even reputable companies look at the science behind a particular nutritional constituent and the way it may work within the body (some data from human trials) whilst completely disregarding the Laws of Nature pertinent to the horse. Is this in the best interests of the horse?

Are we looking at short-term gain with possible long-term pain from other areas of the horse's body, which may only show up over time?

Some data suggests that herbivores fed animal products may develop organ disease, growth abnormalities, tumours or digestive disorders.

However, if you have an old horse that is joint sore then using any of these supplements to relieve inflammation and pain and to enhance the quality of life is an option, as possible long-term negative effects don't apply to the oldies.

It's undoubtedly a difficult situation as some of the animal-based supplements can

really improve arthritic horses as they do in humans and dogs. Short term trials have reinforced this.

As horse owners we have a responsibility to the long-term health and maintenance of those horses in our care. At this stage there appears to be no long-term preventative against arthritic disease from the animal based supplements, just short-term relief that allows the horse to continue to perform as some supplements do relieve the pain of arthritis and joint disease. This is a positive aspect for our older horses with a limited life expectancy but should we be using these animal based supplements on our performance and younger horses without research into the long-term effect on the horse's health and digestive system?

*Author's note.*

*Using my hair assessment system I rate horses for all feeds and nutritional supplements as, like humans, what suits one horse may not suit another. Rating is done on a scale of 0 - 10. 10 = perfect, 5 = average or not required, 0 = poison. 3 and below is damaging to the horse's system.*

*After rating over ten thousand horses over 27 years, the results have shown ALL horses have rated anything containing animal products three or below. I have had many client's horses that have been diagnosed with unusual tumours, particularly in the gastro-intestinal tract. Hence above article.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



### Angela Davison The Horse Herbalist

*Angela pioneered Classical Herbal Medicine for Horses in the 1980s, she has been working, teaching and learning in the field ever since. With a wealth of experience behind her Angela created her unique Hair*

*Assessment system in the 90s which forms the foundation of her work in healing horses. Author of Flower Remedies for Horses, Pets and People, Angela is a qualified Medical Herbalist, an Equine Herbal Specialist and Fellow of the Australian Traditional Medicine Society. Enquiries: [thehorseherbalist.com](http://thehorseherbalist.com)*

## ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WEED ERADICATION

Goats have a reputation for eating almost everything, a trait that's proving beneficial when it comes to tackling weeds on a property. Sandrine Rangeon's business Rainbow Goats, provides a service that helps property owners control rampant weeds in a safe and eco-friendly way, by using high-density grazing with goats. Using about 100 goats Sandrine sets up electric fencing to contain the renowned escape artists, and they get to work devouring anything green in their path.

With their insatiable appetite the goats will work in any weather and across any terrain, allowing landowners to keep chemical herbicides to a minimum while eradicating invasive species. Sandrine told the ABC that the goats can usually go through about one to two acres (0.4 to 0.8 hectares) of weed per week, depending on the amount of vegetation. For properties with difficult terrain, and property owners looking for an environmentally sustainable way to get rid of weeds then goats can be ideal.

The NSW Rural Fire Service is in the final stages of a trial using goats for hazard reduction in high-risk bushfire areas.

Blackberry bush for dinner

