

Colon Cleanse

Dr. Susan Mende, DVM, Dipl ACVP

This is the recipe for a sand clearing equine colon cleanse. The first time that I did this myself I swore the horses would not eat it; if your horse doesn't eat this, let me know but it will be a first.

You will need

- bran (from feed store, wheat bran usually comes in 50 lb bag and looks like brown dried potato flakes)
- mineral oil (maybe at feed store, also at human pharmacies in pint bottles; you will need a couple gallons/several pints)
- sweet feed

In a large bucket, mix 4 pounds of bran with mineral oil instead of water to the consistency of stiff mashed potatoes. No water at all. The mixture will look shiny and brown. Sprinkle some sweet feed on the top for additional flavoring (perhaps 1-2 cups maximum) and present to the horse.

To stack things in your favor, give when the horse is hungry and not after it has been grazing or just gorged on hay. Give when the mixture is fresh and don't make any additional portions ahead of time. Let it replace the regular grain ration in four (4) consecutive meals (i.e. am and pm meals for 2 days).

For the normal horse, gastric transit time is 24 hours. This means that roughly 24 hours from the first bran meal the stool consistency should change. It will look like stool, but the consistency will be a little less formed (not tight fecal balls) and most hopefully it will mop up all the additional fluid; I call this semi-formed. Sometimes you can appreciate mineral oil because this semi-formed stool will actually look a little greasy and shiny, or you may appreciate some greasiness on the horse's butt or tail hairs. If you check the texture of this stool with a gloved hand you may appreciate a gritty feel if the horse is truly clearing sand, or you can try a sediment test and watch for sand to settle out in the bottom of a clear jar.

Horses that have a large sand burden may be treated for longer. Generally speaking, once weekly feeding of the bran-mineral oil mixture should clear and/or prevent sand accumulation in the colon.

Bran can be flatulogenic for some horses, so watch for any signs of mild gastric discomfort. If you notice this call; generally discomfort is self limiting and does not require any treatment. Occasionally a horse will feel quite ill; this is generally when there is a lot of sand to move from the colon. If your horse has a lot of sand, we will discuss this possibility. On these occasions the horse's can be hospitalized and placed on intravenous (IV) fluids. The fluids help support them while they are feeling ill, and the additional hydration assists in breaking up the sand and helps to move it out.

Good luck and may the cleaning begin !