

Bourdeaus' and Bushey Inc.
P.O. Box 187
Middlebury, VT 05753



Bourdeaus' and Bushey Inc.
(802)-388-7000
Email: bourbush@together.net

Horse Nibbles

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Core Training for your Horse




*Summarized from: Marcia King
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Recent studies have found that horses that have done core training exercises for a few weeks have better posture, are more rounded, are more elevated through the withers, and perform better, especially in collected movements. Core training exercises differ from other conditioning methods because of the particular muscles being worked. These exercises target the joints and muscles in the horse's back and neck. They are designed to increase the flexibility of the joints between the vertebrae and strengthen the horse's muscles, particularly the muscles that hold the horse's back in a rounded position during work.

Core training exercises are done from the ground. For neck rounding, extension, and bending exercises, the handler uses bait (a treat) to encourage stretches and movement. For lifting of the back, balancing, and hind limb extensions, the handler uses hand pressure to

obtain the desired response. Any rider, regardless of skill level, can utilize these techniques and not expensive tack or equipment is needed.

There are three types of exercises to use.

-  *Mobilization exercises* - Start with for about a month. Used to improve the range of motion and start to strengthen muscles used to move the neck and back.
-  *Core strengthening exercises* – Introduce for another month. Further strengthening of the muscles responsible for posture.
-  *Balancing exercises* – May be added after about 6 months of strengthening the core muscles. Improves balance and stability by inducing the horse to control manually induced shifts in weight.

For more information of specific exercises or an exercise program, check out the DVD and Book *Activate Your Horse's Core* by Hilary M. Clayton, Mary Anne McPhail, and Narelle

The Five Basics of Horse Feeding

There are five basic parts of a horse's diet that need to be balanced based on the age, activity level, and nutritional status (pregnancy, illness, or diet correction).

Water – A horse can only lose 15% of its body water before it becomes fatal. Your horse should always have access to clean and fresh water. On average horses will drink 10 to 15 gallons per day, lactating horses will consume as much as 30 gallons of water in a day.

Energy – Carbohydrates (sugars and starches) and fiber (hay) are the main source of energy in the horse's diet, fats are a secondary source of energy. Grains (corn and oats) are the most common sources of carbohydrates. Energy status is most easily evaluated by body condition and should be maintained in moderate condition with the ribs covered but still able to be felt and the top line relatively flat when viewed from the side. Underweight and overweight horses are both more susceptible to disease and poor performance. Corrections in energy content of a diet should be made gradually with changes in diet and exercise.

Protein – Protein is made of amino acids that the body uses to build and maintain tissues. Age, stage of development, weight, growth rate and breed determine protein requirements. Over feeding protein to young horses (twice the requirements) has been associated with certain developmental orthopedic diseases. Performance horses that use more energy than consumed will use protein as an energy source, however it is a very inefficient energy source and produces more body heat than traditional energy sources. Grass hay and unfortified grains are often low in protein. Protein deficiencies can lead to reduced growth, weight loss, reduced performance and endurance, rough or coarse hair coats, and slow hoof growth. Work with a nutritionist and your veterinarian to determine protein needs and the best supplements for your horse.

Minerals – Mineral requirements of horses are very complicated and often misunderstood. For many minerals the balance with other minerals is often more important than the amount in the diet.

A good example of this is Calcium. The Calcium to Phosphorus ratio should be greater than 1.5:1 and less than 4.0:1.

Vitamins – Most vitamin requirements in a healthy horse are met from feed, forage, and pasture. Carotene in fresh forage is converted to vitamin A in the body. Microorganisms in the large intestine produce B vitamins. Young horses, performance horses, and horses under greater than normal stress may require vitamin supplementation.

In order to meet your horse's requirements clearly evaluate the work load of your horse and have pasture and hay sources evaluated for nutritional values. Contact a nutritionist at Bourdeaus' and Bushey, Inc to help balance your horse's diet.

December Specials

Black Oil Sunflower Seeds
Buy 10 bags get 1 Free - \$267.50
(\$24.32/bag)
Buy 5 Bags – \$27.95/bag
Buy 1 Bag - \$28.95/bag
(All bags must be purchased at one time)

Stop in the store today to pick up stocking stuffers for your horse and presents for the horse lover in your family!

Horse Treats – Peppermint, Licorice, Apple, and Carrot

Flavored Stable Licks –Apple, Peppermint, and Carrot

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Show Ring Supplies

