

What about . . . PHOTIC HEADSHAKING?

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Photic headshaking is caused by an inflammation/irritation of the trigeminal nerve that runs up the horse's face between the nostril and the eye. Symptoms can run from some relatively mild sneezing (a sort of buzzing in the nose) and head shaking up to violent sneezing fits and extreme headshaking to the point of causing imbalance and even the possibility of throwing the poll and spine out of alignment. Head shaking caused by an inner ear infection is usually accompanied by vertigo or dizziness and the horse would probably appear ataxic or wobbly walking. UC Davis has also discovered head shaking symptoms with no apparent trigeminal nerve involvement, although we question the accuracy or ability of testing sub-clinical nerve damage. Another possibility is TMJ involvement due to lengthy dental sessions.

Regardless of symptom level, the horse is usually uncomfortable enough for the owner to avoid riding since its attention will rightfully be on its discomfort rather than attempting to pick up subtle rider cues. At the extreme level, the horse can become downright dangerous to ride. Sneezing and headshaking are usually exacerbated by strong sunlight (the *photic*) especially in the late spring and early summer. At such times, a sun-screening fly mask or even tinted racing goggles can help diminish the amount of light entering the eye and can thus help diminish symptoms.

While most vets are unsure of the actual cause of the nerve damage, most holistic vets, and others working with such horses, see an extremely suspicious link between photic headshaking and Spring vaccinations. Such vaccines usually include at least one of the encephalitis forms, Eastern or Western, and also can include rhino/herpes vaccine plus, at least in certain parts of the country, an additional West Nile Virus vaccine. These vaccines are nerve culture based. In fact, many holistic vets actually think that the rhino vaccine itself, a mutated strain of the virus, may be contributing to herpes (an equine form of shingles) outbreaks. In fact a local vet has stated that blood tests on photic headshakers prove an abnormal level of rhino vaccine. Because of this apparent vaccine link, we believe that no horse with photic headshaking should *ever* be vaccinated again; such horses are ill and it states very clearly on all vaccine inserts that they should never be given to a compromised animal.

Also highly implicated, at least to holistic-minded individuals, are the neurotransmitter wormers like any in the ivermectin class and especially Quest. While these strong chemicals were designed to affect only parasite nervous systems, anecdotal evidence is pouring in to the contrary: Horses are becoming ataxic, or initiating headshaking, or exhibiting other signs of neurological damage following the use of such chemicals. There are other forms of parasite control discussed in HORSE BASICS: PARASITES which, in our opinion, are far safer to utilize.

So to avoid perhaps most instances of photic headshaking in the first place, our recommendation is to avoid vaccines and strong chemical dewormers. For horses already exhibiting neurological damage including photic headshaking, the suggestions below have proven successful for numerous horse owners.

Since B vitamins and various minerals, especially magne-

sium, are vital for the body's ability to repair nerve damage, affected horses have shown improvement with **DYNAMITE Easy Boy** which contains both the B vitamins and magnesium. If a horse is on **TNT**, the **Easy Boy** is already a component, but more could certainly be used depending on the severity of the symptoms. Also **Izmine**, as a total trace mineral supplement, is also overall high in magnesium and seems to help feed the entire nervous system. Make sure your horse has access to it free choice; many owners report their horses eat large quantities when stressed neurologically. It is also possible to simply add 1-2 oz per day (during neurological stress) to the feed in addition to offering it free choice.

Other **DYNAMITE** products proven helpful in such situations. **MSM** is a natural anti-inflammatory which can ease nerve irritation. Also, supporting and re-building the immune system through a round of both **SOD** and **SuperStress** have proven effective for many. In the case of neurological damage, we are suggesting the use of **SuperStress** rather than the usual **Hiscorbadyne** because of its extra Vit E content known to aid nerve damage. Of course **ESTER C[®]**, a major component of both **SuperStress** and **Hiscorbadyne**, is a long-recognized natural anti-inflammatory and immune system supporter. Do not overuse the **SuperStress**; maintenance doses only after 7-10 days of therapeutic doses.

For horses requiring even more B-vitamin support than what is available in **Easy Boy**, some owners have used 600 mg (two 300 mg human capsules) of *choline* a day plus a good B 100 complex with great success. The capsules can simply be opened and mixed with feed or syringed into the horse's mouth along with a little **DynaSpark** to cover the bitter taste and to add electrolyte balance. Some owners have even resorted to 1000 mg B₁₂ injections weekly to help support ravaged systems. Also effective has been the addition of 1000 mg *lysine* temporarily. Lysine is an amino acid that blocks *arginine*, the amino acid that the herpes virus specifically uses to replicate itself.

Homeopathics have also proven extremely helpful. *Thuja* is the choice for clearing vaccinosis symptoms with some owners giving it regularly following any required vaccines. With photic headshaking, some have been successful with a single very high 1M potency (in combination with the *Lysine*) while others prefer several doses per day for a few days of the more common level of 30c. Others have used *Hypericum*, a specific for nervous disorders, after the *Thuja* and at the human dosages of 30c. As with all homeopathics, stop with improvement of symptoms.

From a mechanical standpoint, both chiropractic and cranio-sacral therapy have proven successful in realigning both vertebrae and TMJ, thus diminishing discomfort. Acupuncture treatments have also proven effective in alleviating symptoms.

First and foremost we believe in nutritional support of the immune system via the **DYNAMITE** program; without that, no other treatment will be as effective. Of course, even more important is to avoid toxins in the first place as much as humanly possible. ■