

# ***Equine Influenza the Natural Response***

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***If we observe the forces of nature at work, we will be constantly amazed at how life, with the desire to maintain its constant evolution, overcomes imbalance.***

***In our arrogance, there seems to be a perception that man can somehow prevent a natural phenomenon that if was left unchecked would simply run its own natural course and die off. The scales of life would rebalance, and life would go its merry way, a little wiser perhaps. Certainly the immune systems of our horses would be stronger.***

## ***Coping in Quarantine***

***Horses that are most at risk for any disease are those that are subjected to high levels of stress. High stress is the result of compromising the horse's natural ability to be a horse. So, stabled horses with no free exercise have the most obvious stressors to deal with. In fact, the risks are even greater when we add long term use of drugs like Bute (clinically known to impair digestive function and cause gastric ulcers) for joint pain, and antibiotics (known to impair the immune response) when a secondary infection is present. The issue then becomes an increasing downward spiral- because with impaired digestive function comes a nutritional deficit. When the immune system, already struggling is then impacted by antibiotics, we have further compromised the horse's ability to cope.***

## ***The Virus Invasion Cycle***

***When an animal- human or equine – is under threat by a pathogen the bodies own defenses come to the rescue. This is a common understanding. So, what is actually happening?***

***Firstly, the body has to recognize that it is under attack. The first response is to protect vulnerable areas, so thickened mucus or mucus in general begins to form to cover some of the exposed the mucosal linings of the body. These are simply nasal passages, esophagus and bronchi.***

***Along with this is a raised temperature. The raised temperature is important because it may be the only defense the body actually has to kill a virus. The body can literally burn up the virus by heating itself in this way. If we don't allow a fever, we are slowing the defense process considerably.***

***Once the virus has taken hold, the body has to deal with the metabolic waste that the virus produces, and the debris left over from the death of healthy cells. This will cause the whole system to feel very painful- this is the pain that comes with the flu as the body has to store this debris***

*somewhere. The lymphatic's are the main system used- but often the debris ends up in places where it should not be- like in joints ( causing inflammation- another healing response) until the blood stream and lymphatic system can carry it away to be processed by the liver and excreted by the kidneys.*

*Movement causes pain, but movement is essential because it is movement which is required by the lymphatic system to work efficiently.*

*In an animal that is healthy and strong, these invasions are dealt with easily and efficiently as the immune system builds its antibodies with the support of the above immune response. A small period of illness is observed, and recovery is relatively easy.*

*The kidney and liver function of these animals is also efficient because the nutrition required to keep all these organs healthy is available, and the animal has had little or no stress that impacts the metabolic functioning.*

*All in all- survival of the fittest at work!*

*In the case of the immune-compromised animal a different story is told. The responses are all inhibited, so recovery is slower. The metabolism is inefficient- impairing the excretion of the toxic viral waste, and the debris caused by dead cells. This slows all immune responses- causing a cascade effect that takes a long time to recover from.*

*In some cases the metabolic shock can be so great that some animals become susceptible to secondary infections which can become lethal.*

*Colic from stress and pain, and more poison from the bacterial infections are now taking their toll.*

*Nutritional uptake can be reduced due to tension in the gut or ulcers, reducing even further the peak nutrition required to maintain the healthy immune response.*

*The cornerstone to this disease cycle lay in addressing all aspects of the elements at work, and supporting the bodies' ability to cope.*

*To do this we need to improve the environment and comfort of the horse, support the horse with peak nutrition in a bioavailable form ( like whole feed and herbs) and try not to compromise the horses immunity by over doing treatments that are band aiding or masking the symptoms, resulting in suppressing the genuine immune response.*

*Herbs can offer immune support, kidney and liver support, blood cleansing (cleaning the system of viral debris) and nervous system support. Anti inflammatory herbs can be used to assist discomfort in the joints.*