What You Need To Know About Feeding Salt To Your Horses.

Salt or Sodium Chloride is an essential electrolyte - the horse needs it to survive!

Most horses will not take in enough salt even when given a salt lick. Salt is often thought of as a summer issue, but it's vital to ensure adequate intake all year round.

Why Its Needed

Some Key Reasons

Hydration

Salt is the main electrolyte found in blood and the fluid that surrounds cells. When salt levels are low, drinking is inhibited which can lead to dehydration.

Muscle Function

Salt plays a key role in the contraction and relaxation of muscle fibres including the heart muscle.

Transmitting Nerve Impulses

Salt enables the transmission of nerve impulses around the body. It regulates the electrical charges moving in and out of the cells in the body. It controls your taste, smell and tactile processes.

Chloride

The Chloride part of salt is essential in the digestion process. It is used in the production of Hydrochloric Acid in the stomach for digestion; it preserves the acid balance throughout the body and helps to carry carbon dioxide from tissues to the lungs.

Salt is - Sodium Chloride NaCl

40% Sodium

60% Chloride

Types of Salt

Sea Salt

- Unrefined
- Very bio-available (easily absorbed)
- No chemicals added
- Includes other naturally occurring minerals including iodine

Rock Salt

- Unrefined
- Less bio-available than sea salt
- No chemicals added
- Includes other naturally occurring minerals including iodine.
- Includes trace levels of iron not a reason to avoid!!

(10g includes approx 0.39mg of iron. A horse at rest needs approx 400mg iron)

Table Salt

- Refined - other minerals are removed
- Less bio-available
- Anti caking agents added however in small quantities
- Iodine is usually added (horses need iodine)

1 litre of sweat contains approx:

3.5g Sodium

6.0g Chloride

Forage and feeds usually contain little salt, and horses don't take enough free choice from licks and blocks.

The amount to feed will vary

Resting or Retired
Approx 10 - 15g per day

Light to Moderate
Approx 30g per day

Hard Work
Between 30 and 100g per day

This infographic was created by Amy Mitchell of:

HEAVENLY HOOVES

EQUINE PODIATRY