Don’t get stressed!

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The best protection against stress starts with gut regulation. If the intestine is weakened, the immune system loses strength and reacts much more quickly to stress factors. Permanent stress can negatively affect the horse’s entire metabolism. The body is more susceptible to allergies, faecal water, diarrhoea, colics, laminitis, stomach ulcers, or summer itch.

Stress and its consequences lurk everywhere

Horses are exposed to stress factors on a daily basis. Often they are not visible to horse owners at first, but they strain the horse in the long run. These include, for example:

a) Wrong diet: oversupply leads to a strain on the metabolism in the long term. The detoxification organs such as the liver and kidneys must constantly run at full speed. Too much energy causes obese horses, while too much protein can lead to kidney damage. Undersupply leads to the mobilization of body reserves, this consumes additional amounts of energy. Too much calcium makes magnesium absorption difficult and can lead to secondary deficiency, even if the feed contains enough magnesium. Deficiency situations can arise, which in the long term can lead to severe syndromes such as decalcification of the bones or mobilization of protein from the muscle tissue.

b) Psychological stress: the weaning of foals from their mother is a very drastic experience that can also traumatize the foals in the long term. Young horses being broken in or active show horses that are not up to the performance requirements of their riders (overstraining) also often show psychological stress factors. Recreational horses are also exposed to psychological stress, for example in the case of severe pain such as a colic, an exacerbation of laminitis, or traumatizing injuries. Continuous stress can cause a stomach upset. The consequences: loss of performance, digestive disorders, gastritis, or stomach ulcers.

c) Horse keeping: epending on the keeping system, horses are offered different possibilities for movement. The horse’s body is geared towards movement, so not only the respiratory tracts are cleansed by walking, the digestive processes also run better when the horse moves regularly. The often limited opportunity for social contact in individual stalls is considered problematic today. But keeping horses in groups can also mean permanent stress, especially for horses that are not very dominant and that are very low in the hierarchy.

d) Social stress: today, keeping horses in groups is certainly preferable from a species-appropriate point of view. However, one should carefully observe whether a horse is actually suitable for group keeping. Diseases such as faecal water or stomach ulcers, but also colics are associated with the social stress of group keeping.

e) Environmental stresses: the ingestion of poisonous plants such as ragwort or the excessive ingestion of acorns trigger secondary digestive stress. The application of sprays on the neighbouring field can also cause stress. The shedding in autumn and spring is ultimately also an environmentally induced stress factor, caused by climatic changes that strain the metabolism and thus stress the horse.

f) Pathogens and moulds: in addition to various types of worms, such as the stomach worm, maw worms, or even tapeworms and their negative consequences on the digestive system, mycotoxins are particularly responsible here. High contamination of the basic feed with mould fungi (or their metabolic products – the mycotoxins) or also high contamination with chlostridia or botulism pathogens, for example in grass silage, “stress“ the body. They attack the metabolism and thus the digestive and also the immune system.

g) **Use of medicines:** many medicines used in horses have side effects on the gastrointestinal tract or on the microflora in the intestine. These include in particular antibiotics, wormers, or cortisone. Stabilizing the intestinal flora is important in order to avoid permanent consequential damage and secondary diseases.

The use of essential oils is also criticized today. Peppermint oil, for example, is suspected of causing liver damage when administered continuously. Equally controversial discussed is the use of ginger, which irritates the gastrointestinal mucous membranes when administered continuously. It is not without reason that both products are on the doping list.

Protection from stress begins with bowel regulation

Brewers' yeast, especially also in combination with spent grains (**Leiber YeaFi® BT**), apple pomace, and unmolassed beet pulp (**Leiber YeaFi® AB**), can support the horse in "stressful situations". It serves the microflora in the intestine as a nutrient substrate. It ensures better nutrient utilization and thus keeps the pH value stable. Brewers' yeast products strengthen and support the intestinal mucosa. This serves as the first protective barrier against the penetration of pathogenic germs, pathogens, or mycotoxins. At the same time, ß-glucans and mannanoligosaccharides from the brewers' yeast cell walls (**Biolex® MB40**) bind mycotoxins, displace pathogenic germs, and strengthen the gut-associated lymphatic tissue (GALT) – which has a decisive influence on the immune system.

Gut protection is immune protection and thus an effective means of supporting horses in acute stress situations.

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