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SECRETS TO HEALTHY YET SIMPLE HORSEKEEPING PART I

I hear this all the time from regular visitors, clinic participants and followers “your horses are NEVER sick, what’s your secret?” Dare I tempt fate with a statement like this? Oh boy, well I figure it’s more important to share my horse care program risking criticism and industry snubbing in the hopes I resonate with a new horse owner who is confused and feeling overwhelmed, or a long time horse owner who is facing new issues of illness. With that said here’s my disclaimer: Missy Wryn is not a veterinarian and does not make any claims of health or cures for horses. Missy’s program as outlined below is solely her personal experience. Any action taken on your part is at your own risk. Ok that’s out of the way, so here’s my experience:

The last time I had a vet out for one of my horses was over seven years ago. Benny was a rescue horse who had been locked in a stall for two years that we know of and was on his 6th home in 9 months before I agreed to take him. A month after he moved into my barn Benny became gravely ill with a gas colic scaring me half to death as his vitals were bottoming out due to his pain. During the exam the gas was relieved and Benny quickly recovered once the sedation and pain medication wore off. No vet calls since!!! So what’s my secret? SIMPLICITY.....

My program is very simple but not for everyone. When I say simple my motto is “less is best”. Below I have outlined my care program and how it supports a healthy happy horse who gives me an enchanted relationship that meets my deepest soulful desires of connection with a horse and nature overall:

FEEDING:

- Depending on where you live if you can purchase **local grass hay** that is low in protein and sugar go for it. Since my horses are not in horseshows or racing they don’t work hard therefore they don’t need high protein and caloric feed. High sugar hay is like giving a child a candy bar for breakfast, would you do that? Once you switch to a low sugar and protein hay you’ll probably notice a huge difference in behavior. I found my horses responded to the local hay by losing their bloated hay bellies while putting on weight in all the right places like across their topline. It makes sense to me that my horses have acclimated to their environment therefore their bodies have responded positively to the local hay. When I have brought in hay from the Eastern part of Oregon my horses put on hay bellies, have loose stool and are hotter in behavior due to the higher protein, and sugar which local hay does not have because of the climate. And speaking of hotter behavior, Alfalfa is made for lactating cows, not for horses. BUT I understand in drought conditions and some areas of the country there is only so much hay available.

Therefore some horse owners are feeding alfalfa and supplementing with straw so their horses have something in their stomachs. Which brings me to the next point:

- **Feed your horse four (4) times a day** if pasture is not available. Horses have small stomachs and large guts so smaller amounts of hay four times a day instead of two big feedings will reduce the incidence of colic, illness and stress. In a perfect environment horses are grazing all day, but in our domestic environment many of us do not have access to pasture so we must emulate as close to nature as possible. When feeding only twice a day you are asking your horse to fast 8-10 hours which they are not physically designed to do. If boarding your horse with someone else and they only feed twice a day gently educate them about extra feeding as it reduces the incidence of colic and stress that can lead to illnesses. Also feed from the ground not a hay basket or bin. The horse is physically designed to eat with its head down off the ground, they are not like deer; they don't glean from trees unless they are starving. Horses get various nutrients from dirt too just be careful to remove sand and bedding if you are feeding in a stall. Otherwise feed your horse from the ground and outside on good weather days.
- **Supplements** – oh boy this is always a big debate. I'm just going to tell you what I use and you can decide for yourself. I feed supplements five (5) days a week taking weekends off. My horses and those in training and board get a scoop of a multi-vitamin, a scoop of broad spectrum pro-biotic along with Natural Trace Mineral "loose" salt. I won't mention brands, but it's important to read the labels avoiding sugars, sweeteners, and corn, wheat, soy and petroleum bi-products. If you are not sure about an ingredient write it down and investigate. There are so many great resources now, and I keep in mind the manufacturer is trying to make a sale so I look for other resources beyond the manufacturer to get my information. I do not feed processed mixes, grain, wheat or oats etc. Remember my horses are pleasure horses that do not work hard physically so they do not need bulking up and I absolutely do not give them vegetable oil. Have you ever felt the coat of a horse that gets vegetable oil? Yuck. Think about what vegetable oil does to our arteries, why would we think that's healthy for your horses, it's not!! There are healthier ways to put on weight for working horses and hard keepers, but that is another article. Call me for brand names 888-406-7689 or email Info@MissyWryn.com
 - Good digestible absorbable Vitamins
 - Natural Trace Mineral Loose Salt
 - Probiotics
 - Rice Bran pellets as a carrier – 1 cup
- **Water:** 24/7 access to clean water, an absolute must. Clean your horse's trough regularly. During the summer the troughs get dirty quicker with mosquito larvae and algae so keep your eye on this. Just dump it out, give it a scrub and refill. I use the cheap livestock floaters from the hardware store with low to the ground 35 gallon troughs that are easy to dump over (I bucket out as much water as I can to lighten the lift). I learned to install simple plumbing so I plumbed right into my faucet by the barn, buried the PVC and used a bending hose to attach the floater to the pipe by way of advice from the guys at the hardware store. Voila I had auto-waterers without buying an expensive system.

I think that covers it on feed – yes it's that simple. You may have to tweak for your area, but once you've got the right combination you'll know by your horse's physical appearance, behavior and fecal matter.

Stay tuned for Part II which includes Hoof Care & Horse Keeping from pasture to paddock, dental to blanketing.

For high res pics contact Info@MissyWryn.com or call 888-406-7689

Internationally recognized horse trainer and member of the Association of Professional Humane Educators, Missy Wryn provides comprehensive horse training, horse management, and effective communication workshops, clinics, and presentations across the globe and at her Zen Barn in Estacada, Oregon. Missy is the producer of the famed, “free for viewing” Training the Whole Horse® and Starting Under Saddle video series, plus founder of HorseMAREship™, and DO NO HARM Productions. Missy is also the creator of the All-In-One Bitless Bridle, founder of IRON FREE RIDING, and the Equine Support Center for Fibromyalgia. For more information visit Missy Wryn’s website at MissyWryn.com or call toll free (888) 406-7689.

HOOF CARE:

- You've heard the term "no hoof no horse" well it's true. Horses have five hearts, one in their chest and four on the ground. The hoof is a heart pump in the frog creating negative pressure that draws blood into the hoof capsule with each step creating a shock absorber for each foot and the body, and then pumping the blood back up into the leg and throughout the body. Shoes interrupt this process plain and simple so I'm a barefoot advocate and my horses wear boots when we ride. I'm not dismissing shoes all together since my farrier will remind me that corrective shoes are sometimes necessary and not all horses are barefoot rehabilitation candidates, especially if they've been in shoes most of their life. I recommend finding a **Certified Barefoot Trimmer** and **Certified Farrier** who, like my farrier, continues their education as research continues to develop with the availability of CT scans and MRI's. My farrier has been working with me since 2001 and I've had the delight in continuing my education every time he comes back from a dissection workshop or a new certification class. He is a **Certified Barefoot Trimmer** and **Balanced Shoer** who understands in-depth the structure and mechanics of a horse, not just the hoof. A good farrier is worth every penny and being on a waiting list for. Once you get your first appointment make sure you schedule your next three visits before they leave.
- **Horses need hard ground and gravel, gravel, gravel.** If you are in a wet climate you gotta have lots of gravel. At my facility horses have to walk from their stalls over a large gravel section to get to their water which is outside in their paddocks. This forces them to walk on the gravel which toughens their souls and helps dry out their hooves along with ensuring blood pumping. I always get people commenting "you don't have mud, why?" Gravel Gravel Gravel.
- **Stalls:** In each stall there are hard rubber stall mats on top of 4 inches of gravel. This provides good drainage, a place for the horse to lie down out of the elements and a surface free from fecal matter, sand or mud to eat from. Besides feeding four times a day I clean stalls with every feeding.

HORSE KEEPING:

- **Indoor/Outdoor:** At my barn horses have 24/7 access from their stalls to the outdoors. There are 100+' paddocks from their stalls so they can come and go providing movement and exposure to the elements.
- **Paddocks:** The paddocks have 6' No Climb Equine fencing with a single strand electric wire across the top. I have not had a horse incident or accident yet!! I believe the No Climb fence has kept our horses safe from hurting themselves yet allows them to play with each other by racing, charging and kicking at one another without incident.
- **Pasture:** I have 2+ acres of pasture that provides some limited grazing, but most important body movement. Horses are designed to be in motion. I supplement the pasture with hay so the horses maintain good health and do not eat noxious weeds. Depending on the weather they may spend several days on the pasture before rotating them for another herd to have their turn.
- **Herd Life:** I always make sure horses get along with one another before putting a herd together. I carefully observe behavior between horses by letting one to two horses out in the arena where they can meet a new horse that is still behind their gate in their stall, but are able to put their noses together for greetings.
- **Blanketing:** I avoid blanketing as it interrupts a horse's thermal physiology. Instead I feed the horses more food in the winter – food is fuel. If a horse is shivering I will put a blanket on them,

load them up with hay and pull the blanket off once they are dry, warm and satiated. If we have an icy snowfall I may blanket the lighter coated horses like a Thoroughbred, but for the most part horses will grow enough coat to meet their needs.

- **Sheath cleaning:** I use apple cider vinegar for sheath cleaning. Often excessive discharge geldings have can be a result of an overgrowth of yeast due to the use of wormers and antibiotics so you want to boost the probiotics and add Diatomaceous Earth (DE) to their vitamin regime for 20 days if you are not all ready doing that (see the section on WORMING). The apple cider vinegar is helpful in maintaining the PH balance of the sheath. Never use soap!! Soap is drying and can cause itching and irritation. I then use Bare Skin Barrier by Nature's Balance Care as a moisturizer. I have found my horses stop rubbing their tails out when I use this combination to clean their sheaths.
- **Flies:** I use all Nature's Balance Care products such as the Face & Body Formula and Bare Skin Barrier. These products can be purchased on my website www.MissyWryn.com. I am the founder of Nature's Balance Care which was born out of frustration when I could only find toxic products that were being passed off as "all natural" as if that was safe. Since the founding of Nature's Balance much awareness has been brought to bear with EPA hearings so the market has improved greatly. There are many copy cats now which is the greatest form of flattery. The more choices the better for horse owners. Be careful; don't purchase products that don't disclose their inert ingredients. It's not the law yet, but companies that care about the wellbeing of you, your family, your pets and the planet will fully disclose ALL the ingredients – You Have the Right To Know.
 - Fly Mask
 - [Face & Body Formula](#) by Nature's Balance Care
 - [Bare Skin Barrier](#) by Nature's Balance Care

VACCIINES:

- Some may call me irresponsible, but I do not vaccinate my horses. I haven't vaccinated since 2005. A veterinarian told me it was a waste of money vaccinating my horses especially since they don't go to shows. This same vet asked me a good question "do we as humans get booster shots every 3-6 months? NO, so why do we vaccinate our horses? MONEY" that was his answer.
- Vaccines weaken the immune system, which is my opinion based on my personal research. And I can tell you I've rehabbed many horses who arrived sick just after being vaccinated. I've cared for a lot of horses with abscesses which I believe were directly related to toxicity of vaccines.
- It's a personal choice – you must research for yourself. My experience is I don't have sick horses and I believe it's partly due to the fact that I don't vaccinate.

WORMING:

- There's a symbiotic relationship between parasites and horses so you don't want to wipe out ALL the parasites with paste wormers.
- Paste wormers are now experiencing a tolerance issue in horses due to the over-use of wormers.
- I use Diatomaceous Earth (DE) in my horse's vitamin regime for 20 days every 3 months.
- I take a fecal sample twice a year to check the level of parasites. If the fecal count is over 100 I will use a paste wormer that is recommended for that time of year. However I have not had to use a paste wormer in several years.

- If my horse's withers are sensitive in-between taking fecal counts and treating with DE I will take another fecal sample. I have found for my horses their withers get sensitive when they have an overgrowth of parasites. However I haven't had this problem since using the DE

"Less is Best" guides my horse care program from feed to supplements, hoof care and exercise. Keep it simple and keep it low stress which has proven to be a healthy lifestyle for my horses.

Give me a call with any questions at 888-406-7689 or email Missy@MissyWryn.com. I'm happy to support you and your horses in any way I can.

Nationally recognized horse trainer Missy Wryn developed **Training the Whole Horse®** on the foundation of **Do No Harm**. Specializing in **Iron Free (bitless-spurless)** riding for both English and Western Pleasure riders, Missy teaches safer communication and control while deepening the relationship between horse and rider. Missy Wryn is also the founder of the Equine Support Center for Fibromyalgia, IRON FREE Riding, **HorseMAREship**, Sisters of the Saddle, DO NO HARM Today, Stop Poisoning Pets, People & the Planet for Profit, Nature's Balance Care, and creator of the ALL-IN-ONE Rope Halter Bitless Bridle. Visit www.MissyWryn.com for more information or call toll free 888-406-7689.