

Equilume – A Shining Light for Your Horse

Blue lights twinkling at dusk in the pastures of horse breeding centres around the world, from the Hunter Valley in Australia to the Kentucky Bluegrass, are becoming a common sight as a new equine breeding technology is embraced by horse owners. The source of the light is the Equilume Light Mask, an innovative mobile lighting headpiece for horses. It was developed in Ireland by University College Dublin researcher Dr Barbara Murphy who identified that a low intensity blue light shining on one eye is all that is required to advance the breeding season in horses.

This clever technology avoids the need to maintain mares indoors under stable lighting until 11 p.m. nightly for eight to ten weeks beginning around Dec 1st. The artificially extended day length provided by the Equilume mask acts to inhibit a hormone called melatonin and stimulates the mare's reproductive system to activate earlier in the year, in time for the official start of the breeding season on Feb 15th. A useful application for owner-breeders is for use on fillies in their final months of training to kick-start their reproductive activity before beginning a stud career.

For horse breeders interested in producing early foals, or, who require recipient and donor mares cycling early in the year for the best chance of successful embryo transfer, the Equilume Light Mask offers a flexible and time-saving management tool to ensure competition animals are cycling at the right time.

One of the many benefits of the long days of summer is the return of the horse's sleek summer coat. An additional function of light treatment using the Equilume masks is for early shedding of the winter coat, a desirable outcome for many performance and sales animals. The Equilume Light Mask is now being successfully used ahead of the start of the show season to have horses looking shiny and bright a lot earlier than normal. The unique technology in the mask allows horse owners to leave their animals out at pasture and still have them shed their winter coats as well as if they were under lights in a stall each night. Normally this takes 6 weeks, but can occur even faster when your horse is also rugged. More importantly perhaps, competition horses can now travel to shows with their own personalized lighting source and owners no longer have to worry about insufficient lighting in show barns disrupting their horses hair growth.

A good coat also means improved performance. A recent scientific study conducted by the Japanese Racing Association revealed that an extended light regime early in the year increases muscle growth in two year old horses and improves their response to training. The summer hormones induced by light help horses to perform to their best so a shiny coat indicates that things are good on the inside as well as the outside. The innovative Light Mask technology means that show horses will not have to be clipped through the winter months and still look and feel their best earlier in the year.

The light mask is designed to be activated once at 4pmon the first day of use. It will then automatically turn on at the same time each day and automatically switch itself off at 11pm. Its use means breeders can leave their mares outdoors with confidence that their horses are receiving the right amount

of light to activate their reproductive systems and improve their coats. It saves costs in terms of labour and bedding while the horses are naturally healthier and happier outdoors.

Further information on the product, the research and testimonials from customers can be found at www.equilume.com