

## "Spring Time Danger"

I realize the title does sound a little dramatic, I'll grant you that point. Yet after reading this some of you may change your mind. Actually there are several of you who know all too well the danger that spring brings to many Horses in Oklahoma. The consumption of large amounts of spring grass do cause Laminitis or the more commonly known term of "founder", along with colic are two of the biggest killers of Horses. Spring green grass is not always the first choice in what is healthy for your Horses. At first fresh naturally growing green pastures sound like the perfect thing for all Horses to be eating. More than just a few Horses of all breeds and all ages suffer terribly painful health issues do to consuming too much of Oklahoma's green springtime grass.

Some Horses that have not been exposed to high moisture content winter diet. Or Horses that can be sensitive to the richness of ingredients in new tender growing grass can have some type of stomach issues with this fresh grass. Although baled hay is just harvested pasture grass, it still was dried and cured by the sun before it was baled. If not properly cut and baled the pasture grass rots and becomes moldy and unsafe for Horses to eat. Horses that have become use to eating hay instead of eating grass can be at risk. This can occur at any age and be very tough to understand by the Horse owner. It just does not make sense for a Horse to be at risk do to eating grass at its finest.

Horses that spend there entire life on pastures with no other type of food source than the naturally growing grass, have a natural adjustment through the seasons. The Horses metabolism adjusts slowly and naturally through spring's richness to winters dormant season. If you move a Horse off of a pasture and place them in a living environment that requires the feeding of baled hay. Then after a few months you return that same Horse to the now rich pasture, you may be placing that animal in harm's way. Also Horses that are exposed to the ability to eat 24/7 instead of a couple of meals each day, this new freedom can cause a Horse to over eat and not allow the Horses metabolism to adjust. Unfortunately there is no set rule to go by to insure that your Horse is safe this spring.

Realizing that spring green grass is high in moisture and high in many other areas, is a great start in protecting any Horse from "founder" or "colic". If you have a Horse that has been victimized by some sort of eating or gastric issue, knowing that spring grass can be a relapse situation is a great start in keeping your animals healthy. Contacting your local veterinarian or Horse doctor is also important; knowing all you can is always the best defense against this type of trouble. Your farrier or horseshoer can apprise you of any changes in your Horses hooves when trimming takes place.

Understanding that there is a risk to your Horses eating spring grass is the best defense you have. Then asking questions to Horse professionals along with exposing your Horses slowly to the new growth, all this along with monitoring your Horses while they are on spring pastures is the way to decrease the risk factor. The grass may be greener on the other side of the fence; it just might be to green for your Horse.

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