
WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT ABOUT OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS?

As I'm sure many of you are aware, there has been a lot of interest recently in the health benefits of supplementing Omega-3 fatty acids in human diets and there is also interest in feeding them to horses. When human diets are supplemented with foods high in omega-3 these omega-3 fatty acids replace some of the omega-6 fatty acids in cell membranes and in particular arachidonic acid. This is important because arachidonic acid is a precursor for inflammatory response. So if there is less arachidonic acid there is less potential for inflammation. In humans, consuming more omega-3 fatty acids has been shown to reduce pain perception along with the rate of degenerative disease development such as arthritis. This year in the nutrient requirements for horses, the national research council states that "data from studies where horses were fed diets enriched with omega-3 fatty acids (flaxseed and fish oils) have demonstrated modulation of inflammatory mediator synthesis by cells taken from blood, peritoneal fluid, or respiratory secretions." The physiological importance of these findings is still unclear, but feeding increased levels of omega-3 fatty acids may alleviate or even prevent inflammatory conditions such as arthritis and recurrent airway obstruction. With so much interest in the equine market place for joint supplements, I am sure that this is an area that will receive a lot more research in the near future. ☺
