

What are electrolytes and why are they important to my horse?

Electrolytes are substances in the blood and other body fluids that carry an electric charge. Common electrolytes include: sodium, chlorine, potassium, calcium, and magnesium. These minerals regulate nerve and muscle function, hydration, blood pH, blood pressure, and the rebuilding of damaged tissue.

Horses, like humans, lose electrolytes when they exercise and sweat. To maintain appropriate electrolyte concentrations and body fluid levels, these electrolytes must be replaced. Horses will receive some electrolyte replacement from their daily diet; however, salt is lacking in forage and grain. Commercial feed and a salt block can aid in replacing the salt that is needed for their diet. If your horse is exposed to high heat and humidity or is worked heavily, causing him to sweat excessively, he may need the addition of an electrolyte supplement to help maintain necessary fluid balance and body function.

There are many different electrolyte supplements on the market and it is difficult to determine which supplement is right for your horse. Optimum electrolyte standards include: 45% - 50% chloride, 6kg/oz sodium, and 4.8g/oz potassium. In addition, sweat contains nearly 80% as much potassium as sodium and twice as much chloride than sodium. You want to choose an electrolyte supplement that most closely mimics the sweat that is being lost by your horse. It is best to choose an electrolyte that contains little to no sugar. Some electrolytes may contain sugar for palatability, but it is not necessary and typically the more sugar, the fewer electrolytes. Further, if your horse receives furosemide (Salix, Lasix) there may be a need for additional calcium in their diet. The horses' gastrointestinal health should also be considered when administering electrolyte supplements, as repeated use can lead to stomach irritation.

In an effort to fill the need for a balanced equine electrolyte supplement that replenishes the minerals lost in sweat and provides added calcium while supporting gastrointestinal comfort, the veterinarians at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute developed Relyte HA. Relyte HA is the first electrolyte supplement with added calcium and Hyaluronan (HA) to buffer against stomach irritation.

This unique electrolyte formula is...

- Is designed to replace electrolytes and calcium lost in sweat.
- Is buffered with hyaluronic acid to promote gastrointestinal health.
- Is calcium-enhanced, with NO added sugar.

Relyte HA comes in an easy to administer dial-a-dose® syringe and contains two doses per tube. Each 30cc dose is the equivalent to .5 liter of sweat and is Apple flavored for palatability.

References:

What are Electrolytes and Why Are They Important? February 24, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.equinews.com/article/what-are-electrolytes-and-why-are-they-important>

J.A. Reynolds. Electrolytes for Horses. Retrieved from: <http://www.discoverhorses.com/all-abouthorses/electrolytes-horses-html/>