

~BRUSH WITH DEATH~

While I am not a professional writer, this letter factually relates our experiences with an extremely "heavie" horse and the amazing "cure" that resulted from reading an article that appeared in your magazine.

One of the most disheartening sounds to a horse owner is the sound of coughing coming from the barn. There must be hundreds of horse owners who have experienced feelings of hopelessness and despair brought on by a coughing horse. A "heavie" horse can mean anything from occasional reduced time in the saddle to having the afflicted animal put down. And, although there are alternative feed products and medications that offer relief to the suffering equine, the results are, for the most part, temporary at best. Most of us who have found ourselves with a heavie horse have desperately tried everything from beet pulp to cortisone injections.

While our other two horses remained healthy, "Brushie," our 20-year-old Quarter Horse mare, suddenly developed heaves, and in two years time her health, her attitude and her body deteriorated to the point where there was very little quality of life left for her. Instinctively I knew the best thing I could do for my loyal old friend was to give her death with dignity. However, just a few short months ago, while I was struggling with that weighty decision, I chanced upon an article that gave her a stay of execution.

One day while looking for new, fresh material to read regarding horses, I chanced upon the Summer 1989 issue of THE WESTERN HORSE magazine that was to turn our lives around. An article by L. Sellnow, entitled, "MSM: A Wonder Nutrient," proved to be the timely answer to my prayers. Although the article primarily advocated the effects of MSM on horses suffering from laminitis (which had no real bearing on any of my horses' immediate needs), I thankfully read the article to its conclusion, because well into the article, it briefly stated: "(MSM has) ... had success in clearing up both lung noises and heaves." That sentence struck me like a bolt out of the blue! The word "success" fueled the flames of my last gasp of hope. Before the magazine dropped onto my coffee table, I was on the phone ordering this wonderful and mysterious MSM.

(MSM is a registered acronym trademark* for methylsulfonylmethane, a fine white powder credited with clearing up a myriad of equine ailments including epiphysitis, arthritis, lameness, and inflammation as well as increasing circulation. A very impressive list of claims not to be taken lightly!)

Brushie's heaves had reached the stage where lasix, azium powder, and cortisone shots no longer offered her any relief. Up until the spring of '89, the cortisone shots, which were kept as a last resort - for the really wracking bouts of coughing, could always be counted on to give her at least two weeks of easy breathing, but they no longer afforded her even an hour of relief.

Once the cortisone shots proved ineffective, I desperately grasped at the old wives' tale that fresh garlic eases bronchial ailments and began sprinkling her grain with diced garlic. The first dose of garlic caught Brushie off guard; she drew the deepest breath she had drawn in months, her nostrils flared, her eyes watered, and her breath from that point on, was enough to melt down the barn!!! Bizarre as it sounds, the fresh garlic gave her a modicum of comfort. It seemed to offer her more comfort than the cortisone shots did at this point and it was considerably less expensive, but it wasn't long before she refused her grain because of the taste and smell of the garlic. She was, quite frankly, just a few weeks away from death's door.

When I began adding MSM to her feed it was with the idea that we had tried everything else and had nothing left to lose. If the MSM didn't give Brushie any relief in a very short period of time, she would have to be put down without further delay. MSM was the last resort.

Miraculously, by the end of the first week, it was obvious that Brushie was not only breathing more comfortably, but her constant coughing had subsided to only an occasional cough. By the end of the second week, even the occasional coughing ceased and her appetite increased. Once the coughing stopped, we cut the dosage in half. This was indeed a miracle! After a little more than two years of more or less constant bronchial problems, it was sheer joy not to hear hacking coughs and labored breathing coming from the paddock.

Although my husband and I were truly impressed by the results of this wonderful white powder thus far, there were still more to come. By the end of the third week, it was all too apparent that Brushie's mental attitude was improving along with her physical condition as she reclaimed her former position as the "Backyard Boss" with the vigor and enthusiasm of a much younger horse.

In her recovery she has gained back the weight she lost and she is once again an alert, healthy animal with a shiny coat, bright eyes and head held high. It's now been more than six months since Brushie took her first dose of MSM. The transformation is truly amazing. The "ol' girl" in her rejuvenated state can out run our three-year-old Thoroughbred without getting winded, and she looks and acts half her age!

Although Brushie had dropped several hundred pounds during her lengthy illness and was nearly emaciated, she's eating "like a horse" again and looks sleek and healthy. And, all because of a white powder that offers relief to lame horses.

While I realize that more than two years may seem like a long time for an animal to suffer through heaves, I was guided by my veterinarian's advice that Brushie had a strong will to live and was still reasonably comfortable although her riding days seemed to be over. I also held out hope for finding a cure. Brushie wasn't suffering from a mere "touch" of heaves; she was nearing the end of her rope and yet, just after a month of taking MSM twice a day, it was obvious to all who had been in contact with her over the last couple of years that she was not only getting relief, but that she was back on the road to good health. As of this writing, she is perky and frisky. We're trail riding again, doing light cantering, and Brushie is looking forward to her 23rd birthday! Best of all, Brushie is no longer plagued by lung noises and coughing. Thank you WESTERN HORSE magazine and L. Sellnow for the introduction to MSM. My horse and I owe you a great big debt of gratitude!

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