

Gamma oryzanol and the racing Thoroughbred

Dr Jennifer Stewart BVSc BSc PhD MRCVS Dip BEP

For some years now there has been interest in the effects of gamma-oryzanol in humans and animals. Hundreds of anecdotal reports include accounts of the benefits – which range from better muscle definition, increased testosterone levels, release of endorphins (pain-relieving substances made in the body), promotion of lean muscle tissue growth, protection against stomach ulcers, improved appetite and calmer temperament - through to indirect benefits due to better stress tolerance – and finally to no benefit at all.

Whilst anecdotal reports are useful, clinical research is necessary to provide unequivocal evidence and validate anecdotal accounts. Scientific studies in humans and other species have shown that gamma-oryzanol, an extract from the cells of a rare variety of the oryza plant, has anabolic and anti-oxidant effects. It has replaced the use of anabolic steroids and clenbuterol for meat production in Europe and, of equal importance to the thoroughbred racehorse is that, in several species it has been proven to have a protective effect against stress-induced stomach ulcers. Stall confinement and training are probably the two most significant factors in inducing gastric ulcers in horses and loss of appetite frequently occurs when horses enter the final stages of preparation and begin racing.

A scientifically conducted study on the effects of gamma-oryzanol in 40 horses in full race training in Australia has produced conclusive results that meet the stringent and exacting criteria of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), such that VITAVITE ANAZOLIC is the only registered gamma-oryzanol supplement available. The combination of poor appetite with alterations in gut acidity have negative effects that anti-ulcer drugs cannot correct and supportive therapies should be considered.

Field trials in the USA using forearm circumference as an indicator of change in muscle mass, found thoroughbred geldings in full work increased this measure by up to 2cm when on supplementary gamma oryzanol. The observed anabolic effects of gamma oryzanol may result from improved appetite and protection against stomach ulcers.

Although it is found in the bran of wheat and other grains, as well as various fruits, vegetables and herbs, processing and stabilization can affect the activity and degrade vitamin E levels. Because of these limitations, supplementation is required to reach therapeutic dosages. VITAVITE ANAZOLIC is the first registered source of supplementary gamma-oryzanol, providing over 1200mg per dose to reach the levels necessary for improved appetite and muscling, weight gain and ulcer protection. Because of the major drawbacks of appetite loss and ulcer treatment in horses - cost and recurrence of ulcers once treatment stops - long-term prevention with gamma oryzanol, a far less expensive therapy for continued treatment and protection is advisable.