

Adding a little spice to your horse's diet can help in coping with insulin resistance

By Gloria Garland L.Ac, Dipl. Ac. & CH.



Insulin resistance (IR) is becoming an all too common problem among horses. Cinnamon, a spice found in every kitchen cupboard, may offer help.

IR what is it and why is it a problem?

Insulin resistance (IR) is the inability of the body to remove blood sugar (glucose) from circulation. Insulin resistance can lead to the development of several related diseases like laminitis and equine Cushing's disease.

Excess bodyweight, lack of exercise and/or a modern diet high in sugars and starch (found in high amounts in many commercially processed feeds) may predispose a horse to develop insulin resistance.

Typically, an IR horse is an easy keeper with a cresty neck or unusual fat deposits on its sides or tail head. IR horses often get warm feet, become tender footed or have a tendency toward laminitis.

Cinnamon - How it works

Very simply, cinnamon helps enable cells to recognize and respond to insulin, the hormone that transports glucose (sugar) from the blood and deposits it into cells. Methylhydroxy chalcone polymer (MHCP), a compound in cinnamon, makes cells more responsive to insulin by activating the enzyme that causes insulin to bind to cells and by inhibiting the enzyme that blocks this process.

Many types and varieties of cinnamon

The most potent varieties of cinnamon are from South East Asia, especially those from Viet Nam. The two types of cinnamon used in traditional Chinese medicine are: **Rou gui** (*Cortex cinnamomum cassia*), specifically the bark of the tree, and the tips and twigs of the tree called **Gui zhi** (*Ramulus cinnamomum cassia*). The cinnamon in your spice rack probably originated from Indonesia or Mexico and tends to be milder in flavor and effect.

Separately both types of cinnamon are useful in the treatment of IR but optimal effects are achieved when the two are paired. Rou gui more strongly simulates the action of insulin and activates insulin receptors while Gui zhi has the effect of stimulating blood flow to th

extremities and promoting microcirculation in the capillaries – epically helpful in the case of chronically laminitic horses.

When not to use Cinnamon

Cinnamon is not recommended during fevers or bleeding and with high insulin sensitivity (EPSSM horse).

Used in conjunction with a low sugar, low starch diet and exercise, cinnamon offers help to IR horses.

Chinese herbal supplements should be used properly and thoughtfully under the guidance of a licensed Chinese herbalist. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), used properly, is an adjunctive therapy and, therefore, complementary to veterinary treatment. Information presented here is not intended to replace proper veterinary diagnosis or treatment and should not be used for that purpose.



Gui zhi (*Ramulus cinnamomum cassia*)



Rou gui (*Cortex cinnamomum cassia*),