

Straight from the horse's mouth -- study reveals owners supplement choices

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Horse owners are most likely to use their vet to guide the choice of nutritional supplements they feed their animal, but also rely heavily on recommendations from other riders, a unique study has revealed.

Early findings from the research, being led by the School of [Veterinary Sciences](#) at The University of Nottingham, also found that joint and mobility and [behavior problems](#) topped the list of owners concerns when seeking [supplements](#) for their horse.

Dr. Sarah Freeman, Associate Professor and European Specialist in Large Animal Surgery, who is supervising the study said: “This collaborative study by vets and nutritionists is the first of its kind. It has given horse owners a voice on important issues, and the results will help vets, nutritionists and horse owners to work together to match needs for different [horses](#).”

The study is being undertaken by two third-year veterinary students,

Charlotte Agar and Rachael Gemmill, in collaboration with Dr. Teresa Hollands at Dodson & Horrell Limited, a leading manufacturer of horse feeds, including nutritional supplements.

More than 800 horse owners took part in an online questionnaire for the survey, which was launched in September last year and is the first study of its kind into which [nutritional supplements](#) they use and the reasons behind their choices.

Word of mouth advice

The study was primarily aimed at dressage and eventing riders as a way of looking at which issues were of most concern to competition horse owners, what supplements they would like to see available and the best ways of passing on information about supplements to them.

Initial results from the study found that almost half of all owners (49.8 per cent) rely on their vet for advice on which supplements to use, followed by internet articles or reviews (39.4 per cent). However, when asked specifically about their latest purchase of supplements, word of mouth and advice from other horse owners was identified as the most important source most frequently (18.1 per cent).

Joint and mobility supplements were considered to be the most important, however, there were differences between the competitive disciplines, which is likely to be explained by the different demands of the individual sports.

Further research is needed to analyse the choices made by owners in greater depth and to investigate how best to provide better information to owners on the supplements available.

The next stage of the study will involve interviewing individual horse

owners to provide a more detailed insight into their decision making process.

Provided by University of Nottingham

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