

# Ask the Nutritionist

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*Ask the Nutritionist is a monthly column featuring questions answered by PhD equine nutritionists and sponsored by Purina Animal Nutrition. Have a nutrition question you want to see featured? Email Marie Rosenthal. For clinics looking for specific nutritional advice, visit [purinamills.com/ask-an-expert](http://purinamills.com/ask-an-expert).*

## My clients often ask about joint supplements for their horses. How do I determine which ones to recommend? Help!

Joint supplement questions abound! A veterinarian survey conducted in 2017 by Purina Animal Nutrition determined joint supplements were the No. 1 supplement question veterinarians received from their clients. With upward of 500 joint supplements on the market, it's no wonder horse owners have questions and want recommendations.

It's helpful to have a methodology to determine which joint supplements work best for the situation and when to recommend a pharmaceutical intervention instead. Hence, we developed "Test RIDE" – an acronym to help you evaluate and recommend supplements. Like you would with a new horse, putting supplements through a Test RIDE will help determine if they are a good fit.

### TAKE SUPPLEMENTS FOR A TEST RIDE

Test RIDE stands for:

- Research
- Ingredients
- Dose
- Efficacy

When evaluating a joint supplement, first look for one with peer-reviewed, published **research** to support its efficacy in horses. Reputable companies with high-quality products will invest in this research and have it available for review. If a company doesn't have product research, we suggest passing and moving to another option.

Next, look at the **ingredients**. Does the supplement contain one or several key ingredients targeted for joints? Or does it contain myriad ingredients seemingly unrelated to joint health? If there are so many ingredients the amount of each will be very small and ineffective, keep looking for a better option.

This brings us to **dose**. The amount of each joint supportive ingredient should be included at a rate appropriate for the size and weight of the horse you're working with. And feeding instructions should allow a proper amount to be reasonably fed in a day.

**Efficacy** is the last step. You and the horse owner should see or feel a difference in the horse after feeding a joint supplement, especially if it's being used to



treat or ameliorate active symptoms.

When recommending a joint supplement, consider offering lameness exams along with a follow-up exam several weeks later to help the owner determine efficacy for individual horses. If the supplement does not appear to be helping the horse, then it may be time to try a different supplement, therapy or pharmaceutical intervention.

### PASS OR FAIL – WHAT NEXT?

Unfortunately, when many joint supplements are put through the Test RIDE, they fail quickly. But this is the point of the exercise. This rigorous evaluation process will help you determine which supplements can truly support joint health.

If an oral joint supplement is desired, we recommend selecting a reputable product with research behind it, a clear ingredient list, appropriate feeding amounts fed at the proper rate and signs it helps the horse. If there is no clear difference in the horse's response within a few weeks, work with the horse owner on an alternative preventative or treatment plan.

**Contact a Purina PhD nutritionist for a complimentary consultation through Purina Customer Service, 800-227-8941 or send us a message at [www.purinamills.com/ask-an-expert](http://www.purinamills.com/ask-an-expert).**

### UPCOMING TOPICS

**September:** Cardiology  
**October:** Reproduction  
 Stallion needs  
**November:** Reproduction:  
 Mare needs

**Have a question you want to see featured?  
 Send them to [modernequinevet@gmail.com](mailto:modernequinevet@gmail.com).**



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mary Beth Gordon, Ph.D., is the equine research and new product development director at Purina Animal Nutrition. She studies the effect of nutrition on horse health, separating trends from true efficacy.