

Will Falconer 0:01

Well, this is Dr. Will Falconer with the Vital Animal Podcast, and I am thrilled to welcome my guest today, who has a long history with me. When I first came to Austin as a homeopathic veterinarian, she was there and welcomed me into her clinic and said, "We can share my little office here. And I'll give you the small animals and I'll take care of the horses. I'm busier than heck." So, this is Dr. Madalyn Ward. Welcome, Dr. Madalyn Ward.

Madalyn Ward 0:30

Thanks, Will, it's so great to reconnect with you. And those were fun times, weren't they?

Will Falconer 0:36

They were.

Madalyn Ward 0:37

Many moons ago!

Will Falconer 0:39

Yeah, it almost seems like another lifetime, doesn't it?

Madalyn Ward 0:41

It does.

Will Falconer 0:45

Well, you came to mind recently, Madalyn, when I had a great question that came from a dog owner. And she said in effect, "I'm totally getting feeding raw to my dog. He's so much a wolf, you know, genetically speaking, but I'm unsure how to do something similar for my horse." And I know you've been a homeopathic horse vet for years and years now, like I have in the small animal world. So, what's the best natural model for horse people to follow? And how can they pull that off if they don't own 100 acres, for goodness sake?

Madalyn Ward 1:20

That is such a fabulous question, and it's something that I have dealt with through all the years of working with horses. And, of course, the horses couldn't live, most of them, in a more unnatural environment, where they're kept up in stalls and they're fed twice a day and the feed is a commercially pelleted feed, and they get hay and they get, you know, two flakes, morning and evening and then the rest of the day they're just standing around with nothing to do, and no live, raw food in their diet at all. Unless, like you say, unless they have access to pasture, but with the land prices what they are, and unless you have a huge ranch, your horse isn't going to get any pasture. Even if they get turned out, it's going to be in more of a dry lot-type situation. So, how can we supply a more natural diet to horses? And the way that I found to do that was through whole food supplements. And it was in the early '90s, I'd been practicing for a little over 10 years and just was totally frustrated with the fact that my horses that I was treating in my practice had so many chronic health issues. And I started looking for nutrition. And so, the first thing I did is, I started analyzing the feed and the hay, and I would find out, oh, well this hay is a little, you know, doesn't have enough copper and zinc, and this one, the calcium phosphorus is out of balance. And then I would set about taking these formulated products and trying to add them to the diet and thinking,

okay, well I don't have copper and zinc so I'm going to add some zinc sulphate and copper sulphate and the horse should be good now. And they weren't, you know, any better. So then, that's when I started really looking at, how can I get some whole foods into them? And blue-green algae was one of the things that turned my practice around, because it is green, it's high in chlorophyll, which is what they would be getting on pasture, and the horses, just all these chronic issues that I've had with them, with runny eyes and poor-quality hooves and dull hair coats and chronic infections, just starting to add a little bit of blue-green algae really seemed to make a difference, because it was a whole food, and back then there weren't very many whole foods. Now, luckily, we've got a lot more choices.

Will Falconer 4:13

Oh, nice. And I always compare my dog patients to the wolf, who's on the go all day long, and I suspect you have a similar parallel with the mustang. Is that a fair comparison?

Madalyn Ward 4:29

Absolutely. And that's what horses are, is they're intermittent grazers. So, their digestive tract is designed for them to be covering 10 to 20 miles a day and foraging as they go. And people think of horses, you know, just eating grass, but that's actually not true at all. They're browsers. And so, they're going to be eating what grass they can find, but also other forbs and weeds and bark and when they're out on pasture in large, huge acreage like your mustangs are, then they're finding everything they need for every season, and also, they're finding what they need if they have any kind of a health condition. They're able to self-select. And we've taken all that away from our domestic horses.

Will Falconer 5:25

So, they're almost closer to a goat, in that sense. I didn't know this, I thought they were mostly grass eaters.

Madalyn Ward 5:31

Left to their own devices, they will browse almost as much time as they actually eat grass. I know my mule, I caught her one day, I looked out in the pasture, and she's rearing up on her hind legs so that she can get to the leaves in the tree. So, there was plenty of grass around, but evidently, in that time, she felt like she needed the leaves more than she needed the grass. And I see them all the time, you know, they will walk around, even if you have one here, I'll have them hand-grazing, and they'll eat grass for a little while, and then they'll look over and they'll see some weed, whether it's a dandelion, or a milk thistle or whatever, and it's fascinating to watch them actually eat and how selective they are. They really pick and choose what they want.

Will Falconer 6:26

Interesting, interesting. So, you're saying by getting some whole foods in their diet, we can at least get some of those odds and ends covered. What about the standing around all day and eating twice a day? How have you handled that?

Madalyn Ward 6:42

You know, it's so hard on their digestive system, because they continually produce acid, whether they have food in their stomach or not. And so that's where stomach ulcers are

such a huge issue for the horses. So, some of the ways that you can get around that is you can feed them their same ration of hay, and you can divide it into three or four feedings. And if you live with your horses, that's a great thing to do, is just go out and throw them a little extra, so that they don't spend as long a time not having anything in their stomach. If you are not where you have the horses there where you can do that, now we have these hay nets that have very small holes in them, so that the horses have to work a little bit to get the hay out. And so, that's a great way to get them entertained. And so, they, you know, maybe they get their two flakes of hay in, and instead of finishing it in an hour, maybe it takes them two or three hours. So, that's one way to just keep them entertained a little bit longer. And of course, just ideally, the more turnout that they can have, the better. Because even if they don't have food, but if they're out with other horses, or they're even out where they are in an area where they can watch what's going on on the property, so they don't get... You know, part of standing in the stall is not only do they not have anything to eat, but they get so bored. Nothing for them to do, and they're meant to be moving and doing things all the time.

Will Falconer 8:23

Right, right. They're not engaged in anything, if they're just standing in a stall.

Madalyn Ward 8:27

Yeah. And you'll see that they'll start to develop some of the vices, whether it's cribbing, or weaving or walking their stall or tearing things up in their stall, and you know, you can't really blame them.

Will Falconer 8:41

Mm hmm. So, I've heard some years ago about people that were taking this to another degree, which was kind of building, I don't know what you'd call it, like a course for them to go and get hay nets at various places. Have you toyed with that at all?

Madalyn Ward 8:59

Absolutely. Yeah, they call them a pasture of paradise.

Will Falconer 9:02

Nice. Describe that.

Madalyn Ward 9:04

And that is, if you have, I mean, you do need to have a little bit of land, but say you have, you know a 80 by 100 area that you can work with, and so you can get a solar charger, and put in, there's fence posts that you can actually kind of step into the ground and put a hot wire in there and make like a labyrinth for them. And just throw your hay around in different places. If your ground is not too sandy, you can take hay cubes and just scatter them everywhere to kind of mimic grazing, and put the water on one end and the salt on another end. And yeah, that works. That works really well. And it does to a certain degree simulate the grazing. So, I've had some people that have done that and their horses definitely, certainly do benefit. It's a little bit of work, but it's worth it to try and get them a more natural lifestyle.

Will Falconer 10:04

Yeah, yeah. Have some motion in there, have some interest in there. That's cool.

Madalyn Ward 10:10

Yep, absolutely. And, you know, just with horses, you know, sometimes the things that seem like they're a little bit more trouble or are a little bit more expensive, but they pay off so much in the long run with fewer health issues. And when horses start, they're so prone to digestive tract problems because of their unnatural way that we keep them. And, you know, one colic with your horse—not only is it scary for you, but you may be looking at two or three thousand dollars, just for an overnight stay at the vet hospital. That's not even talking about if they, heaven forbid, they would need surgery. So, I found over the years, and it just changed so much for me when I made that shift to realizing that whole foods were the way to go. And letting the horse eat the whole foods and letting the body select from those whole foods, what it needed at the time. And with whole foods, you don't usually have to worry about things being out of balance, because the horse will just take what they need. Whereas with some of these formulated supplements, I think the body doesn't really know what to do with those. It ends up taking a lot of those products in and then they have to be processed and removed through the kidneys, and so even, I'm just not a fan of feeds that have these formulated vitamin mineral supplements in them, because I think some of those can be on the toxic side.

Will Falconer 11:51

I believe it. Yeah, a lot of them are synthetic, I'm sure.

Madalyn Ward 11:55

Oh, you know, they're synthetic vitamins, and they're inorganic minerals gotten from who knows where, you don't know what the sourcing is. And they're put in in the amount that the horse, that every horse, like every horse needs exactly the same amount of minerals, and in every moment of time, and it's not true at all. And I'm just such a fan of looking at what you have available in the way of whole foods. And of course, we're getting away from grains, which I think is a good thing if our horses are not in hard work. But now we've got available for us hay pellets and hay cubes, and that is so much more natural for the horse than these concentrated, grain-type feeds, but you can supplement with those hay pellets and you can give them carrots, you can give them chia seeds or flax seeds or sunflower seeds. Even rice bran, which is somewhat processed but it's still recognizable as a food. You can give them treats of sweet potatoes and apples and different fruits. I mean, horses like oranges, and they eat the peel as well, and they're getting their bioflavonoids. So, you can give, sometimes I'll put out for my horses free choice, you know, different types of herbs. In one bucket I might put some milk thistle, another bucket, some dandelion leaves and some dandelion root, maybe some hawthorn, and it's fascinating to watch what they will eat. And once they kind of realize that it's available for them, they don't overeat the free choice supplements or the herbs. So, there are definitely ways that you can get those whole foods, you know, into them, and the thing that's fascinating to me with whole foods is it doesn't take a lot, even if the majority of their diet is hay and, you know, hay pellets, but just getting a small amount of whole foods in there can make the difference between true health and a horse that is just sort of barely having their needs met.

Will Falconer 14:22

That really surprised me Madalyn, and I'd love to hear you talk more about quantity, because we had a little conversation on email a while back and I was kind of blown away that you were talking about tablespoons, sometimes, and these thousand-pound horses. So, give us a sense of scale here.

Madalyn Ward 14:39

Yeah, you know, some of these foods, especially foods that we're now starting to recognize like superfoods—and blue-green algae is one superfood, a lot of people consider hawthorn a superfood and for people, blueberries are considered a superfood, beets can be considered that. And it seems that those foods that have, the body is not looking so much for the macrominerals, like you would think of, calcium and phosphorus, that sort of thing. It's looking for those trace elements that we maybe don't even know exist. And that's one of the reasons I found such big changes with the blue-green algae, and now it's been researched much more than it was when I first started using it, 30 years ago, and I could not for the life of me understand why a couple of teaspoons for a thousand pound horse could make such a big difference.

Will Falconer 15:51

Amazing.

Madalyn Ward 15:52

But now I understand it, it's a superfood. So, those superfoods have nutrients and qualities to them that maybe we don't even really understand. But they go in and they heal on the level of the DNA and the RNA. And that's what really makes the difference on how those cells are now differentiating and how the body is rebuilding. And that's why I say, a little bit can go a long way. And that's why the horse that's out grazing and goes over and just takes a couple of bites of something, and then moves on, he's constantly rebalancing with all those micronutrients that he needs, not necessarily for his nutrition to build his muscle and to put on fat for the winter, but to heal, you know, his genetic material.

Will Falconer 16:47

Beautiful, beautiful. So a little bit goes a long way. That's amazing to me.

Madalyn Ward 16:53

Like chia seeds, you know, you give chia seeds, a couple of tablespoons to a horse. And you can see the changes in them. And it's just that nutrient profile, it's a superfood.

Will Falconer 17:06

Yeah. I've often told people, you know—we're going to talk about vaccines next, because that can be a long-lasting effect, if you vaccinate—and I've told people, you know, diet, that's an easy one, you can change diet and often see an outcome in your pets in a matter of days, or a week or two. Do you see similar things when you add some of these concentrated superfoods to a horse's diet?

Madalyn Ward 17:30

It's fascinating. I mean, I've had, you know, when the client maybe has their farrier come to

work on their horse, or a lot of times now, people aren't using shoes, so it's the trimmer, and they're trimming their feet once a month, and within a month's time—and you think that's crazy, because normally we think, well it takes six months to a year for a new hoof to grow. But the farrier will notice the difference within a month. And even without the owner saying anything. They'll say, "What are you doing?" you know, "These feet are better." And the thing that's fascinating to me is, I've just had so many times my clients say things to me like, "My horse, I don't know what's in this, but my horse gives me a dirty look if I forget to put it in the food." So, I have to say after 30 years, I'm convinced. At first, I didn't believe it, but I've just had it happen over and over again, I've seen it with my own horses, and I feed my own horses. I mean, they have, you know, my feed room looks more like a kitchen. Just like, for instance, we're making that shift in seasons from fall into winter, and the grass is, we've lost the, you know, it's had a hard freeze on it. So, it's lost its nutrient content. And so, I was just looking at my gelding the other day, his eyes are running a little bit and he had just a little bit of a limp on his right front, which he'll sometimes get when his liver's not working as well as it should. And so, I just go in there, it's like, okay, I've got this wood balance formula for you, that's all whole foods, and we'll just put you on that for a week or so, and then I'll up your algae and get a little bit more green into your system. And we'll see, we'll get you... You know, obviously you're struggling, your nutrition has changed because luckily, we have a little bit of pasture here. And you've just lost that pasture. So, let me see what I can do to help you keep going here.

Will Falconer 19:35

Nice, nice. Well, the other thing that's very much on my mind whenever I talk horses is vaccinations. I've long called it one of the biggest causes of chronic disease in the animals. And my audience who has horses regular reminds me that they are probably the most over vaccinated species among our domestic animals. Some barns do the whole barn multiple times a year, the vet goes through and vaccinates everybody. So, are you concerned with vaccines and their overuse? Have you seen disasters after vaccination like I have with the pets?

Madalyn Ward 20:16

Absolutely. Absolutely, I have, and when I first started getting into the holistic medicine and especially homeopathy, and I read my first article, you know, from a homeopath, about the danger of vaccines, and I remember, it was just almost a visceral response for me, because I had been that, that pushed the vaccines. And to me, it's like, if there was a vaccine for it, why wouldn't you give it to your horse? And, I mean, that's truly what I was taught and what I thought was going to keep my clients' horses the healthiest. I mean, I really believed that what I was doing was absolutely right. And my first reaction, well, this is ridiculous, you know, I thought maybe there was something to this holistic stuff, but if they're not going to vaccinate, then I'm not interested. But it was enough to get me thinking and to get me looking. And I started to put the connection together between the horses a month or two after I vaccinated them how much deterioration I saw in their health, and I would go back to their records and you could trace it back over and over again: episodes of laminitis, uveitis, you know, just general immune system problems, behavior changing, more colics. And I'd go back and look, it's like, oh, yep, sure enough, we vaccinated this horse a month ago. And so with some of the cases that I saw like that... Of course, at the time, I was just starting to

learn homeopathy and was just starting to use some homeopathic remedies. And I would give those horses a homeopathic remedy, and it was almost like overnight that they would reverse and start to become healthy again. And it was horrible for me, because I looked back and I looked at all my cases, because I was, I was one of those vets that, you know, we should vaccinate for everything. And even if my clients resisted, I was like, no, I know best, we've got to do this. So, I understand, you know, where the conventional vets are coming from, and it's an education process, but our horses are being harmed. And I think, really, one of the main ways that they're being harmed is it's affecting their gut bacteria. And horses are so dependent on their gut bacteria, to get the nutrition from their food. And when we give them those vaccines, that have all of those toxic chemicals added to them so that they'll have a stronger effect on the immune system, I think we really do great damage to their microbiome. And that's what sets in process all of these chronic disease symptoms that we're seeing. And then when you do come back with a remedy that is a fit—there's not just a single remedy that you can give. Some people think, "Oh, well, I'll just vaccinate the horse and then I'll just give them a remedy and it'll be fine." It doesn't work that way. But if you do find the right remedy, you can start to reset that gut microbiome and they'll start to recover from those chronic disease symptoms, but it's not a quick process. The damage is long-term, and then you come back and do it again, you know, six months later, and eventually the immune system and the microbiome just gets to the point where it can no longer recover.

Will Falconer 24:04

Yeah, I've seen it over and over again. And surprise is to me that you see a one-month gap as well, like we did in the dogs and cats. Madalyn and I studied together with Dr. Pitcairn in '92 and '93 in our professional homeopathy training. And he said, "You know, I've noticed I can't get some of these animals well, unless I look back in their history, and I realize, ah, I wonder if vaccines have something to do with this illness. They'd get to a point and then they'd stop. And then you'd go, oh, let's look at vaccines. They're, yeah, they're there in the history. Let's find one of those vaccinosis remedies." And, like you mentioned, there's a bunch of them, there's 15 or 20 of them. "Let's find the one that fits this patient, give it and see what the outcome is." And I've done that just like him, and I'm sure just like you, and I've seen a turnaround that like 80% of their symptoms go away. And I go, "Well, you know what that tells us? 80% of that illness was due to being vaccinated. Because we just gave a vaccinosis remedy, an illness from vaccines remedy, and look at how much better he is." So interesting to me that you're seeing the parallel at a month out. There was often that time gap, and if we're not looking for that, well, my god, we're never gonna see it. Right?

Madalyn Ward 25:26

Yeah, it's the top question on my intake forms for my homeopathic consultations, and whenever I see a horse for the first time, that's always what I ask is, what's your vaccination program? And I feel like that's one of the things that I can do to kind of reverse some of the, you know, I mean, I didn't know better, but the damage that I did, you know, to the horses in my care. But I've informed people, and I've... Never again. I'm not going to try and convince them if their belief system is to give the vaccines, but I will at least educate them that we should only be giving the vaccines that can cause death in the horses and even those are probably not, we shouldn't be giving as often as they're recommended. And as the horse

gets older, then you have to really weigh the odds: are you doing more harm by vaccinating them, versus letting them have the chance, usually pretty slight, that they would contract one of these fatal diseases? But are you better to let the horse die healthy, or have a long term chronic illness and live longer? You know, it's a tough choice to make.

Will Falconer 26:52

And I can verify that we'll see seniors, I'll have people write me and say, you know, "My 12-year-old dog was rocking along just great. And then I got an email, it said he's due for another rabies shot. And I felt compelled to do it, you know, I'm a good citizen, etc., etc. And after that everything went down the tubes, the dog is now dragging its hind end, or he's changed his behavior." It's not unusual to see these seniors just go right on into a death spiral. You know, within the next couple of months, they're gone. And they were in balance. They were doing really fine. They were feeding them well, you know, all that stuff. So, it does make a huge difference. I'm curious what the—I've often talked about immune confusion happening after we vaccinate, which is, we're going on this very unnatural route, we're injecting a slew of viruses at a time, and to me bells and whistles go off in the immune system when that happens. And usually what we see a month later is the start of allergies in the dogs and some of the cats, they'll start chewing their feet or they'll start clawing their ears or they'll have an ear quote, unquote "infection," which is really inflammation. And it's all immune system based. At the worst case we'll see autoimmune disease, where they're now attacking their own tissue. So, what are some of the correlates that you see in the horse that would say, "Oh, we've just whacked this poor horse's immune system after vaccinating"?

Madalyn Ward 28:30

Yeah, one of the first things that I notice is a dull hair coat. And I think that's because they're not assimilating the minerals. Just like the soil needs to have a good ecosystem to be able to uptake the minerals into the plant, the horse, if they don't have that good microbiome in balance, they may be able to absorb the calories from the food but not necessarily the minerals and the vitamins. So, their hair coat will get really dull and a lot of times their mane and tail will get brittle and the hooves will crack and not be as strong. And these are horses that, I'll ask the owners, "You know, your horse looks a little dull. What's his feeding program?" And you look at it, and a lot of times the feeding program looks perfectly good. And then my next question is, "Have you vaccinated him recently?" And that's, a lot of times people say, "Yeah, he got his vaccinations in the spring, and now that you mention it, yeah, he's not looked as good since then." So, that's probably one of the more obvious things. But then the other thing, like you say, with the allergies, and what we see on the horses is the hypersensitivity to the insects. So, you know, the flies and mosquitoes that, you know, most of the horses are just used to and they don't bother them that much, they're irritating, but now you've got this horse that is hyper sensitive and like, the culicoides gnat, you know that hypersensitivity. Now they're rubbing all their mane and tail out, and scratching constantly and they're absolutely miserable. And that's one of, there again, you know, I usually will ask, and it seems to start after vaccinations. And then if the client is willing and chooses not to do vaccinations anymore, then the following year, they'll be better and the next year, they'll be better. But if you keep vaccinating, it just gets worse and worse to the point that then they have to be on drugs. And to me, it all comes back to

those vaccines that upset that immune system, that something that the immune system would go, "Oh, that's just a gnat," you know, it's just, "We just got bit by a gnat, it's no big deal." And now it goes into this hyperdrive, "Oh my god, we got bitten by a gnat, we need to scratch all of our hide off." And that's, you know, but it is, it's confused. It's a confused, hyperalert immune system, because of the insult of those multiple vaccines. And oftentimes they don't even come from a normal route, you know. A horse doesn't get a respiratory virus through the bloodstream.

Will Falconer 31:22

Exactly.

Madalyn Ward 31:22

And so, it's not, you know... It's very confusing to the immune system, and I find, most of the time tends to go into more of a hyperdrive and much more sensitivities. But over time, multiple vaccinations, and then you have an immune system that doesn't respond well. And now you've got, you know, an animal that's constantly having infections.

Will Falconer 31:48

Yes, yes. So, one of the things to take away, for every species owner to recognize, is that the immunity that's set up with vaccines is a long-lasting one, right? If it's a virus vaccine, and most everything we use is viruses, the immunologists are real plain about it. They say the immunity lasts for years, if not for life. So, when we're coming through and doing it yearly, there's just no science to that. Or if we're doing it worst case, you know, multiple times a year in some of these barns, there is zero science that supports that, correct?

Madalyn Ward 32:24

I think that is absolutely correct. And, you know, you look at the rabies vaccine, that titer is oftentimes for life. Now, with encephalitis, on some of the horses, they feel like that the immunity after vaccination is at a year, but then they don't necessarily test them further out. But if you look at titers, sometimes those titers will start to decrease after a couple of years. But to me, that's not a guarantee that the immune system has completely forgotten about it, it's just not feeling the need to be vigilant in the moment. But you know, I think titers are kind of a good compromise for the horse shows and things, because that's one other problem, is that people can't take their horses to a boarding stable, they can't take them to a horse show, without having these vaccines. And at least, I think if you can offer titers to say that my horse has a titer, he's not going to infect another horse, you know, I think that's a good compromise. I'd love to see someone get a stall side test, that you could get those titers instantly. Right now, it's such a process that it's really difficult, and only the most dedicated owner will do that. But I would love to see that be something, now especially that more and more vaccines are being required, at least these horses not have to get them more than once or more often than they're needed.

Will Falconer 34:03

Yes, yes. Agreed. Well, Madalyn, tell people where they can find more of your helpful info online. I know you're out there in a couple of different places, right?

Madalyn Ward 34:14

Yeah, I've got a couple of websites. I've got—Holistic Horsekeeping is my one website, and then the other one where I look at the temperament types on the horses, and that's Horse Harmony. And then you can find me on Facebook under both of those names as well.

Will Falconer 34:35

Beautiful, and we will have links in the show notes for all of that. Be sure to send those to me, Madalyn, and I'll get them up in your episode. So, this has been really fascinating, Madalyn. I always appreciate your input. You make the complex nice and simple and you say what you're seeing. You're always the honest one. What we hear is what's reality, from you. So, I appreciate that. And thanks so much for coming on.

Madalyn Ward 35:10

Well, thank you for inviting me and it's just so great to reconnect with you, and I guess you're across the world but, gotta love technology.

Will Falconer 35:19

Yep, we're no further apart than a phone call or an email. So, thanks, Madalyn. We'll talk to you later.

Madalyn Ward 35:26

Thank you.