

Grumpy Horses

I'm not talking about normal, dominance type, grumpiness exhibited when horses are going about their hierarchical business. I'm talking about unwarranted, uncharacteristic, over the top, grumpiness. There are too many grumpy horses in New Zealand. It is not normal for a horse to be this grumpy. They do not want to be grumpy. Something is *causing them to be this way*. Grumpy horses are dangerous. Grumpy equals aggressive. The grumpy expression is a nano-second away from kicking, biting, striking, or coming at you. Whilst in this frame of mind they can be over-reactive and retaliate if you make any move towards them, especially a sudden one.

You need to find out what is causing the grumpiness and rectify it. Multiple factors may be contributing. Go thru the checklist.

When dealing with a grumpy horse you really need to know how to keep yourself safe. This is a combination of understanding what's going on and being skilful with your handling. Inexperienced people should not be around grumpy horses.

Causes of grumpiness

1. Physical discomfort or pain

- toxicity or magnesium deficiency(see Symptoms) causes aggressiveness: geldings to exhibit stallion-like behaviours and mares to have permanent PMT!! Also a major cause of girthing and biting when saddling.
- poorly fitting saddles, covers, tack in general
- dentistry problems
- hoof problems
- musculo-skeletal problems

2. Mental and emotional discomfort or pain

- being fed up of somebody picking on them for every little thing
- frustration, not understanding what they are supposed to do and being pressurized to do it!!
- being made to feel 'wrong' (blamed) when they are 'trying' hard.

What to do about it:

Progressively eliminate all of the above possible causes. Sticking to the same routine and keeping a diary will give you a means of observing and comparing the difference, after you make changes, for example in diet, or have a practitioner visit your horse.

Over the last year, it has been well established that removal from pasture and/or feeding a toxin-binder, significantly reduces or eliminates aggressiveness and girthing in horses. Therefore it would seem logical to try this relatively cheap and simple course of action first. For instance, I know several people who have had up to 3 new saddles over a period of time, thinking saddle-fit was the cause of the problem until finally hearing about a toxin-binder and found the symptoms disappeared within a week.

The simple act of increasing your horses fibre intake by feeding hay, hay cubes or FibaRich pellets will go a long way towards putting a smile on their face!

Then, as soon as possible, have qualified, knowledgeable people check your saddle fit, your horses teeth, attend to the hooves, and musculo-skeletal system.

If there aren't significant improvements within 7-10 days, call your veterinarian. blood tests would be warranted. Perhaps your horse is one of the 5% that still retain testicular tissue after the gelding procedure, in which case a blood test would be needed for verification.