

## **About Lasix (Salix) and “Bleeders”**

**by Karl Donaghy**

*Reprinted from a letter to Bloodhorse Magazine*

As a longtime owner, breeder and trainer of several hundred runners, I am intimately familiar with the effect of Lasix on performance. It is my considered opinion that it has never helped any horse. Although I have never experienced a *confirmed* bleeder, at Suffolk Downs during the 1970-80's we all ran all our horses on Lasix despite the fact that fewer than 1% of starters were confirmed bleeders. The rationale given by some veterinarians was that it helped give a performance edge, while others suggested that the drug could hide the presence of illegal medications.

The truth is that bleeding can be reduced or eliminated through proper nutrition. Key attention must be paid to proper nutrition *in utero* as well as into and throughout life.

Bleeding (the rupture of small capillaries in the respiratory system) results from the breakdown of weak body tissues and *inefficient* blood flow. Both of these issues are directly caused by improper nutrition.

The science is there; the research has been done; the information available. Yet still, owners, breeders, trainers and veterinarians today appear to know little or nothing about what a horse's dietary needs are. Either they just don't know how to access the information and implement it, or they are unwilling to invest the time to understand the science. Instead, they read horse publications that advertise supplements – so, add a little of this and a smattering of that – the height of absurdity.

Think about it: owners invest millions of dollars in horses, yet no one on the farm or at the track is armed with the knowledge of what nutrition these horses really need to maximize their soundness, performance and overall well-being in the long run. (Gastric ulcers and colic are other issues that can be resolved with proper nutrition.)

Recently, I read that the large number of breakdowns at a California racetrack were directly attributed to poor nutrition! While horses that suffer breakdowns may look great, this is not a measure of their soundness. Soundness is built from minerals, vitamins and amino acids, not fat, fiber and crude protein.

The horse industry can only improve when it realizes that it is folly to believe that most feed manufacturers are producing products which provide optimal health, soundness and longevity. They don't.