

DRESSAGE, EVENTING, HUNTERS, JUMPERS

VOL. 41

PRACTICAL HORSEMAN EXTRA

WHAT'S YOUR SUPPLEMENT STRATEGY?

PH's Trainer
of the Year:
**CLARISSA
WILMERDING**

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Leah Johnson

TRAINER

★ OF THE YEAR ★

PRACTICAL
HORSEMAN

2022

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Congratulations to Clarissa Wilmerding



GET TO KNOW PRACTICAL HORSEMAN'S TRAINER OF THE YEAR

*New Jersey
trainer Clarissa
Wilmerding earns
Practical Horse-
man's new trainer
award, recogniz-
ing unsung heroes
of English sport.*

JENNIFER ISKRA

Clarissa Wilmerding has been named the 2022 Practical Horseman Trainer of the Year in recognition for her outstanding contributions to the equine industry as a trainer and coach. Wilmerding, also known as “Chizzy,” runs her training business, Leg Up, LLC, in Califon, New Jersey in the spring through fall, and Ocala, Florida, in the winter. She is also the head trainer at Jenny and Greg Morris’s Hunts End Farm in Gladstone, New Jersey.

The Trainer of the Year award was created as a way to honor the unsung heroes of our sport—trainers who work



Wilmerding coaching Olivia Iskra aboard Baker Street at the Plantation Field Horse Trials.





Wilmerding gives Molly McMillan and her horse, Lily, a lesson at Leg Up, LLC, in Califon, New Jersey.

OLIVIA ISKRA tirelessly to improve the education of both riders and horses—with a special commemorative gift provided by Nutramax Laboratories Veterinary Sciences, Inc., makers of Cosequin® Joint Health Supplements.

“Chizzy is someone who genuinely enjoys teaching and helping her students reach their goals, no matter how big or small they may be,” said Annah Otis, Wilmerding’s niece and student, in a video submitted as part of the contest. “That kind of passion comes through in every lesson and every show. Because it’s one thing to be a great rider and reach the three-, four- and five-star level in eventing, but it’s entirely another to be a great trainer. And fortunately, Chizzy is both.”

Another of Wilmerding’s students, Karli Pinkowsky, nominated Wilmerding by first writing an essay describing why she deserved to be named Practical Horseman’s Trainer of the Year. From all the essays entered, 10 semi-finalists were chosen to submit a video highlighting their nominated trainer.

A Commitment to Students and Community

In the video, Pinkowsky commented about Wilmerding, “She spent almost 10 months helping me to find the perfect partner to pursue my childhood eventing dreams with. It wasn’t until—now I’m 38 almost 39 years old—and met Clarissa that I was able to actually take steps in the right direction and actually feel happy and proud of myself every time I step my foot in the stirrup.”

Longtime student Sarah Pavlini added, “I have known Chizzy for 20 years now. I started riding with her when I was 7 or 8 years old. I mean, forget ‘Trainer of the Year.’ She’s been the ‘Trainer of my Life.’”

Wilmerding is equally dedicated to supporting young riders in the local community. When the Essex Horse Trials returned in 2017, she donated a trophy named after her childhood pony—The Golden Nugget Memorial Trophy—to recognize

the lowest-scoring Pony Clubber aged 18 or under who successfully completed the event. After the U.S. Eventing Association launched the Interscholastic Eventing League in 2020 and a student came to her with the idea of starting a team, Wilmerding helped form Team Wilmerding Equestrian. Wilmerding also teaches lessons for the Somerset Hills Pony Club, the same organization she participated in growing up.

“Chizzy is our savior,” said Sophie Wayner about herself and her horse. “She brought us up from never-done-dressage-before—she was just a backyard pony. Now we’re doing Third Level and beyond. Yeah, she’s amazing.”

A Lifelong Love of Horses and Teaching

Wilmerding grew up in Mendham, New Jersey, where she fostered her love of horses through the Somerset Hills Pony Club and the Essex Fox Hounds. After attending Washington College in Maryland as an undergraduate and Bank Street College of Education in New York City for her master’s degree in education, she decided to pursue a career in the horse world.

She gained experience in England during the 1990s as head groom for acclaimed British eventer Jane Holderness-Roddam, who had given clinics at Wilmerding’s Pony Club. Holderness-Roddam won an Olympic team gold medal in eventing in 1978, won Badminton Horse Trials twice (1968 and 1978) and the Burghley Horse Trials in 1976. Under Holderness-Roddam’s tutelage, Wilmerding rode in her first Advanced event, and she soon discovered a passion for breeding and producing young horses.

While working for Holderness-Roddam, Wilmerding bought Mystery Man II as 3-year-old and brought him back to the United States. Mystery Man (now 30 years old) became a successful four-star horse who competed at the Jersey Fresh International Three-Day Event and Fair Hill International and who qualified for the 2006 Kentucky Three-Day Event CCI4*.



OLIVIA ISKRA

Wilmerding and Beekeeper at the Millbrook Horse Trials in Millbrook, New York.

Other horses she has produced to the upper levels include three-star horses Poppet and Luna, as well as her homebred Beekeeper, whom she competed at the Bromont International and earned a U.S. Dressage Federation bronze medal. Additionally, dozens of horses have begun their eventing and show jumping careers in Wilmerding's program.

Wilmerding started teaching students after returning to the U.S. while she home-schooled some friends' children. Soon, though, people began seeking her out for riding lessons, in addition to bringing horses for training. "Getting my master's in early education has really helped me with my teaching," Wilmerding said. "One of my classes was Observation and Recording, and we literally had to go into a class and just sit there and observe and record. And I think that's really helped me when I teach a lesson—I observe what's going on, and I record what I'm seeing and kind of take a lesson from there."

"I'll teach anybody," she continued. "I love teaching. I want to help people, and I care that they want to learn. I want them to be safe. I want them to get out there and achieve their goals."

Wilmerding's Training Insights

Here are some excerpts from her interview on the Practical Horseman Podcast episode that aired July 29, 2022.

What is your training philosophy?

CW: I treat everybody as an individual. It's the same thing as figuring out the horses—you have to figure out your riders. You have to see what they need and see where they're at and meet them there and try to push them a little out of their comfort zone so that you can challenge them to improve and leave the lesson feeling like they've got homework to do.

I think that confidence is a huge component. You have to feel confident to feel like you can go in [the ring] and do something right. I try to be very positive.

I work a lot on the basics—making sure that my students can get the horse in front of their leg and use their legs and not always go to their hands. I have a lot of different exercises that test that.

Do you have a favorite exercise to work on with your students?

CW: I don't always go to one exercise, but I love this exercise. It's basically a big turn on the forehand, but I call it the "Clock Exercise." The horse is the hand of the clock, and the rider pushes him off the inside leg into the outside hand. It really gets the horses to move away off the inside leg, and it gets the riders to feel the outside rein.

For the more novice riders, more basic transitions—getting the horses to walk to trot, trot to walk, trot to canter or canter to trot and get them to be bright off the leg. I always make sure is that the ponies or the horses are in front of the leg and off the riders' aids.

I pay attention, especially for jumping, on the quality of the canter. I work a lot at the canter, making sure it's a good, true 12-foot stride. Also working within the gaits—a slow trot to a big trot, a slow canter to a big canter, so that the horses are rideable and adjustable.

How do you coach your students through a negative experience at a show?

CW: Riding is hard, right? Things happen. You get eliminated in show jumping, you jump out of the dressage ring or you don't get past fence five in cross-country. I just talk through it and ask, "Where did it go wrong?" and we go back to the drawing board. And that's totally fine.

Maybe you need to go back down a level or go back home and start practicing more ditches. It's having a conversation, talking it through and going back to plan B if plan A didn't work. It's okay to take a step back and work on something.

Or maybe you were just having a bad day. Maybe the horse was having a bad day. And it's OK. It's not the end of the world. Having competed myself and having had those bad days—it's happened to me as well. So, I totally understand. 

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♥ Survey conducted among equine veterinarians who recommended oral joint health supplements.

WHAT'S YOUR SUPPLEMENT STRATEGY?

A commonsense approach for determining what's right for your horse begins with identifying a specific need. Then investigate product contents and claims before you buy.

BY MARY KAY KINNISH

No question about it. You want to do your best to maintain your horse's health and well-being. So, it's likely you've considered adding a supplement to his diet. The array of options is vast with offerings formulated to address all sorts of conditions, from aching joints and brittle hooves to a lackluster coat and uncooperative behavior. But all those choices can pose a dilemma for anyone surveying the market, searching for just the right product to help a horse. It's possible, though, to streamline your efforts

and build confidence in your selection process. Here's how to become a discerning consumer.

Pinpoint What's Lacking

Start by taking a good hard look at your horse to identify the specific health or behavior issue you want to address. That's the advice of Kenneth Marcella, DVM, owner of KLM Equine practice in Canton, Georgia. It's not enough to decide that your horse's coat looks dull or he seems a little thin or more excitable than usual. Instead, go a step further and share your observations with your veterinarian so he can evaluate your horse and

ABOUT KENNETH MARCELLA

Kenneth Marcella, DVM, graduated from Cornell University's veterinary college and moved to the Atlanta area to be part of the veterinary staff for the 1996 Olympic Games. An FEI veterinarian for more than 25 years, he has traveled both nationally and internationally, working with horses and riders at the highest level of their sport. In his practice, KLM Equine, he places special emphasis on lameness and sports medicine.

► When determining if your horse might benefit from a supplement, first pinpoint the issue you want to address, then research the product and finally evaluate if you see positive changes in your horse.





◀ Calming supplements could help settle horses who are nervous, excitable, tense or spooky.

cially important. Begin by becoming familiar with the supplement ingredients most likely to benefit your horse. (To assist you, detailed lists, organized alphabetically in five supplement categories, are included later in this article.) Then study the labels of products you're interested in. Look for:

- a comprehensive list of ingredients and their amounts



determine whether medical intervention or a change in management is needed. As Dr. Marcella notes, a supplement isn't likely to have any appreciable effect if an underlying issue isn't resolved first. Supplements cannot cure serious illness, reverse the aging process or make up for poor nutrition or inadequate management.

Take Time to Research

When advising clients about supplements, Dr. Marcella says, "I think about spending their money as if it were mine." He notes the variety of products on the market and the ease with which they can be obtained. Online availability makes it possible to have buckets, bottles or customized packets delivered to your door. That ease, says Dr. Marcella, can tempt an owner to make snap purchasing decisions, which can turn out to be ineffectual or even harmful. It's far better to invest effort in some diligent research so the product you select actually has a chance of benefiting your horse. Plus, when that happens, you'll know that your money was well spent.

Still, the prospect of studying up can be daunting. The National Animal Supplement Council (NASC), a nonprofit organization of self-regulating suppliers, estimates that more than 1,500 ingredients are currently used in supplements for horses. And, Dr. Marcella emphasizes, those products all fall into the category of nutraceuticals—foodstuffs that claim to have health benefits. Unlike pharmaceuticals—drugs used for medical purposes—nutraceuticals are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Their efficacy does not have to be proven.

As a result, attentiveness to details when shopping is espe-

- instructions for administration
- a lot number—a means of tracking the product and a sign of quality control
- manufacturer contact information—address, phone number, website—so you can get in touch with a company representative, ideally a nutritionist or pharmacist, if you have questions before or after you buy
- product claims backed by scientific data
- the NASC Seal of Quality—an indication that a manufacturer has passed an independent facility audit, has a written quality-control policy and an adverse-event reporting system, and includes on labels any warning statements recommended by the FDA and NASC Scientific Advisory Committee for particular ingredients. (For a list of companies that meet NASC guidelines, go to www.nasc.cc.)

Does it Earn ACCLAIM?

The American Association of Equine Practitioners recommends using the acronym ACCLAIM to help you evaluate supplement labels. Here's what to look for:

- A company name you recognize
- Clinical research that shows product safety and efficacy in horses
- Contents clearly listed
- Label claims supported by scientific data
- Administration recommendations
- Identification of lot and expiration date
- Manufacturer information, including name, address, phone number and website.

► Coat and skin supplements may help bring shine to horses whose coats are dull or dry.



Be Precise and Patient

As a last step before adding any supplement to your horse's diet, determine how the ingredients in the product will interact with or augment the nutrients he's already receiving in his daily ration, including other supplements. An excess of any one ingredient could be harmful.

Then it's time to feed and wait (and maybe wait some more) before deciding whether a supplement is working. As Dr. Marcella notes, results won't appear overnight. It takes time for body chemistry to be affected and signs of change to become apparent. Consider, for instance, that nearly a year will pass between the time you start feeding a hoof supplement and the new growth that emerges from the coronary band finally reaches the ground.

When you're able to detect positive changes in your horse, you'll know that your supplement strategy has paid off. To support your efforts, here are ingredients you're most likely to find in the five most common categories of equine supplements.

Calming Supplements

Their purpose: To settle fractious horses whose uncooperative behavior isn't related to an underlying physical problem (for instance, lameness or dental trouble) or management issue (say, insufficient turnout or ill-fitting tack)

Could help:

Horses who are

nervous, excitable, tense or spooky

Key ingredients: There are two types of calming supplements—nutrient-based, which include vitamins, minerals and other substances that are normally part of a horse's diet to support a healthy nervous system; and herb-based, which utilize botanicals that are known for their calming properties. Be aware: Many sport and show associations restrict the use of these agents prior to competition. Check your organization's governing body for guidelines.

chamomile—a perennial herb of the aster family; used as a calming agent and to treat digestive problems

hops—flowers of the plant *Humulus lupulus* primarily used in beer making; thought to ease anxiety and increase mental balance and concentration

inositol—a sugar-like carbohydrate found in nearly every cell in the body; critical for messages sent between different cells, particularly those found in the brain and spinal tissues

L-theanine—an amino acid found in tea that helps transmit nerve impulses in the brain

L-tryptophan—an essential amino acid necessary in the formation of serotonin, a hormone and neurotransmitter that can create feelings of relaxation and contentment

magnesium—a mineral important for muscle contraction and nervous-signal transmission

passionflower—a woody climbing vine; used to relax the nervous system

raspberry leaves—a source of magnesium and B vitamins; used to support muscle tone and relax a muscle in spasm

taurine—an organic acid central to the health of the nervous system

thiamine (vitamin B1)—a compound found in fresh forage





◀ Digestive supplements are formulated to balance the microorganisms that normally reside in a horse's gut and break down fiber during digestion.

AMY K. DRAGOO

that helps the body's cells change carbohydrates into energy; plays a role in muscle contraction and the conduction of nerve signals

valerian—the root of a perennial herb used to relax muscle tension

vervain—roots of a flowering grassland herb, thought to interact with chemicals that help to regulate nerve impulses in the brain and produce feelings of calmness

Coat & Skin Supplements

Their purpose: To support the production of collagen, keratin and other components of hair and skin

Could help: Horses whose coats are dull or dry or whose skin may be flaky, greasy or itchy

Key ingredients:

biotin (vitamin B7)—an organic compound important in the formation of keratin, the fibrous structural protein that is the principle constituent of hair

calcium pantothenate (vitamin B5)—a powdery salt that helps enzymes work effectively and synthesizes and metabolizes fats, carbohydrates and proteins; essential component of hair and hoof production

flaxseed (linseed)—whole seeds of the flax plant or the oil extracted from them; a rich source of fiber and omega-3 fatty acids used to improve skin, hair and body condition

folic acid (vitamin B9)—an organic compound involved in the production and maintenance of cells, especially those with brief life spans, such as a horse's skin cells, which on average are shed and replaced in 17 days

lysine—an essential amino acid that helps to build collagen in the skin and encourage hair growth

methionine—an essential amino acid that contains sulfur, which strengthens the structure of hair, hooves, tendons and ligaments

niacinamide—a form of niacin (vitamin B3) with antioxidant properties; used to increase skin resiliency

pyridoxine (vitamin B6)—an organic compound that helps to metabolize protein to support hair growth

riboflavin (vitamin B2)—vital for protein and carbohydrate metabolism; functions as an antioxidant; aids in the production of healthy skin

zinc—a trace mineral that is key to the formation and maintenance of skin, hair and connective tissue; involved in immunity and wound healing

Digestive Supplements

Their purpose: To balance the microorganisms that normally reside in a horse's gut and break down fiber during digestion

Could help: Horses likely to suffer digestive disruption due to stress, illness and the administration of some medications

Key ingredients:

dehydrated alfalfa meal—a highly digestible, nutrient-rich form of the perennial legume

enzymes—biological catalysts (particularly amylase, lipase and protease) that work together to break down fats, protein and starch in the diet, supporting feed utilization and nutrient absorption

prebiotics—sources of nondigestible, soluble fiber that feed the beneficial microorganisms in the gut and aid digestion

probiotics—mixtures that are designed to balance the beneficial microorganisms in the gut; include the bacteria *Lactobacillus*, *Bifidobacterium* and *Enterococcus* as well as the yeast *Saccharomyces*

yeast culture—a dried product containing yeast and the medium in which it was grown; facilitates fiber digestion and supports beneficial microorganisms in the gut

Hoof Supplements

Their purpose: To support the quality/growth rate of hoof horn

Could help: Horses with weak, shelly hooves prone to cracking



SANDRA OLIVNYK

► Joint supplements may help reduce the damaging effects of inflammation associated with normal wear and tear.



Joint Supplements

Their purpose: To support the health of joint structures and reduce the damaging effects of inflammation associated with normal wear and tear

Could help: Horses in the early to mid-stages of arthritis and those at risk of joint deterioration because of injury, the demands of use or advanced age

Key ingredients:

ascorbic acid (vitamin C)—a natural water-soluble vitamin essential to the formation of collagen, skin, tendons, ligaments and blood vessels; its antioxidant properties protect cells from damage by unstable molecules (free

radicals) created during normal cell metabolism

avocado-soybean unsaponifiables—extracted and purified plant fats thought to have anti-inflammatory properties

boswellia (Indian frankincense)—an extract of the resin of the *Boswellia serrata* tree used to reduce inflammation

chondroitin sulfate—a large protein molecule that is a major structural component of blood vessels and connective tissue (bone, ligaments, tendons and cartilage); a key component in helping joints resist compression; used to reduce inflammation and pain

devil's claw—a flowering plant that contains iridoid glycosides; believed to have strong anti-inflammatory effects

glucosamine—a natural sugar that is a basic component of tendons, ligaments, cartilage and the thick fluid (synovia) that surrounds joints; used to support the production of cartilage and synovial fluid as well as repair

hyaluronan (hyaluronic acid)—a clear, viscous fluid that is an integral component of cartilage, connective tissue and joint fluid; used to fortify synovial fluid as well as relieve inflammation and pain

methylsulfonylmethane (MSM)—an organic compound containing sulfur; used by the body in the formation of collagen and connective tissue

resveratrol—a potent antioxidant derived from the skin of red grapes and other fruit; used to reduce the body's inflammatory response

yucca—an extract from a flowering perennial shrub of the Asparagaceae family that contains steroidal saponins, believed to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. 🐾

For more information on supplements for horses, go to PracticalHorsemanMag.com.

Key ingredients:

biotin (vitamin B7)—an organic compound that helps the body convert food into energy and contributes to the growth and repair of hooves, skin, hair, nerves and bone

calcium carbonate—a mineral that is the main component of eggshells, seas shells, pearls and bone; contributes to bone growth and maintenance, muscle function and blood clotting; essential to hoof and hair production

calcium pantothenate (vitamin B5)—a powdery salt that helps enzymes work effectively to synthesize and metabolize fats, carbohydrates and proteins; essential component of hoof and hair production

copper—a trace mineral with several roles, including maintaining healthy connective tissue, aiding antioxidant enzymes in cells, synthesizing the pigment melanin and mobilizing iron stores; essential to bone and hoof formation

flaxseed (linseed)—whole seeds of the flax plant or the oil extracted from them; a rich source of fiber and omega-3 ("good") fatty acids thought to promote hoof growth

keratin—a fibrous protein containing a high concentration of sulfur that is the main ingredient of hoof horn and hair; used to prevent joint breakdown and increase shock absorption

lysine—one of 10 essential amino acids (the building blocks of protein) that must be supplied in a horse's diet; necessary for protein synthesis to form strong, healthy hooves

methionine—an essential amino acid that contains sulfur, which strengthens the structure of hooves, hair, tendons and ligaments

pyridoxine (vitamin B6)—an organic compound that helps to metabolize protein to support hoof growth

threonine—an essential amino acid involved in tissue repair and associated with hoof quality

zinc—a trace mineral that is part of more than 100 different enzymes in the body; key to the formation and maintenance of connective tissue; essential to the formation and maintenance of hoof horn, where some of the highest concentrations in the body are found

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Cosequin® ASU Joint & Hoof Pellets contain quality ingredients to support joint and hoof health and leave out the fillers molasses and alfalfa — all while delivering the taste horses love. The colors of our ingredients shine through for a difference you can see.

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Source: Survey conducted among equine veterinarians who recommended oral joint health supplements.
Pellets not actual size. Color may vary.

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