Oxidative Stress and Antioxidant Supplementation During Endurance Exercise in the Horse

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Animal and Poultry Science (Equine Nutrition)

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June 12th, 2003
Blacksburg, Virginia

Key Words: Antioxidants, Apoptosis, Equine, Lipoic acid, Oxidative stress, Vitamin E

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(ABSTRACT)

In these studies antioxidant supplementation and oxidative stress measures were the basis for determining the health and welfare of the equine endurance athlete. The first study determined that lipoic acid (LA) orally administered to horses is effective in diminishing the levels of lipid peroxidation in the plasma, and is non-toxic at a dose of 10-mg/kg body weight. The second study showed muscle leakage measured by plasma creatine kinase (CK) and aspartate aminotransferase (AST) positively correlated to oxidative stress (measured by lipid hydroperoxides) during an endurance race (Research Ride 2001; R1). Also higher plasma ascorbate (ASC) status was found in the vitamin E plus C supplemented group versus the group receiving vitamin E alone. In the third study, the Research Ride 2002 (R2) determined that horses that did not finish the ride had higher CK and AST before, during and after ($P < 0.05$) the ride compared to horses that finished. These results were compared to the finishers of the Old Dominion 2000 (OD) and R1 and found that oxidative stress and muscle enzymes were greater during R2 due to the difficulty of terrain and ambient temperature. A higher level of horses’ fitness in OD also could have explained the diminished oxidative stress. The fourth study calculated that horses at R2 were receiving 2265 ± 114 IU/d of vitamin E in the total diet prior to the race. These levels negatively correlated to plasma CK and AST and positively correlated to plasma $\alpha$-tocopherol (TOC; $r = 0.21; P = 0.005$) throughout the 80-km race. In the final study the LA supplemented group had similar increases in antioxidant status (TOC, ASC, and total glutathione) as the vitamin E supplemented group of horses exercising for 55 km on a treadmill to simulate an endurance race. Both groups also had lower ($P < 0.050$) white blood cell apoptosis throughout exercise then the control group. These studies prove the need for antioxidant supplementation, specifically vitamin E or LA, during heavy endurance exercise to improve the health and welfare of our equine athlete.

(Key Words: Antioxidants, Apoptosis, Equine, Lipoic acid, Oxidative stress, Vitamin E)
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to show my deepest appreciation to the two most important people in my life, my parents Rich and Sue Williams. Little did Dad know that setting me up to ride Tuffy once would carry on my love for horses for so many years. (OH, and a special thanks to Kim Tassie for letting me ride and lease Tuffy during her pregnancy almost 15 years ago.) From the time I mentioned I wanted to go to school for ‘horses’ I never heard anything negative. I am sure if it weren’t for all their support I wouldn’t have made it this far. Just knowing they are proud of me was more than enough encouragement to make it through some of the rough times. Finally reaching the end and obtaining the type of job I have always wanted I am sure is just as rewarding for them as it is for me.

A special thanks goes to everyone at the MARE Center: Burt Staniar, Tania Cubitt, Tanja Hess, Kibby Trieber, Dr. Rhonda Hoffman, Bobbie Moriarty, Bill Helsel, Scott Gerbich, Alvin Harmon and Tim Parmley. They have helped me out with research when extra hands are needed, and were sometimes there just to listen to me complain. Burt, being the voice of reason he is, was there to calm me down and smooth things out when my feathers got ruffled. Tanja Hess was crucial in the completion of my final treadmill study both in helping with the logistics of endurance exercise, and actually running the treadmill while I was stuck in the lab. Tania and Kibby had to put up with picking up my slack when I was running horses on the treadmill or writing my dissertation. I also can’t thank Tania enough for helping me take care of Mickie when I was doing my study, in Blacksburg or at home writing. Bill and Scott deserve special thanks for helping with the installation of the treadmill and exerciser (even though I never used it), which were crucial in me finishing my doctorate. Dr. Jeannie Waldron also deserves endless gratitude for letting me use her treadmill to train the Arabians before ours was installed, and for all the endurance advice from a clinical prospective. I would also like to thank Louisa Gay, our lab technician, who helped me get all my results on time, especially from the last study, without her I would still be in the lab.

My advisor, Dr. David Kronfeld, deserves more than just a thank you. He is a brilliant individual whom I owe a lot of gratitude to for giving me the best possible
graduate career I could attain. His words of wisdom and profound statements are always
engrained in my memory (see line 1 of introduction). I am truly grateful that I was able to
complete my full five years of graduate work with his supervision. Some of my best
qualities were only discovered because a little of his encouragement. I would also like to
thank the rest of my Ph.D. advising committee. They have taken time out of their busy
schedules to assist and advise me during my graduate work.

Dr. Amy Ordakowski has been one of the best friends and mentors a person could
have. Being two years behind Amy I really learned a lot by watching the trials and
tribulations she went through during her Ph.D. (e.g. calling during her Prelims to tell me to
“Quit now and don’t turn back.”). I especially want to thank Amy for all the guidance she
has given me, both professional and personal, in the last couple of years. Amy has always
been there to help, everywhere from showing me how to do my first pasture sample to
dealing with job interviews and negotiations. She was instrumental in my interview
success at Rutgers. I learned a lot from her as a mentor, I just hope that I can be that much
of an influence for someone some day.

My long time friends also deserve special appreciation: Karen Cizek, Eve Miller,
and Ann-Marie Hancock. At times I am surprised that they still call me a friend. They
always seem to understand that there may be times when I seem to fall off the planet.
Other members of my family: brother, Matt; grandma, Joe McCoy; grandma, Ann
Williams; aunts, uncles, and cousins, need special thanks for sticking with me and keeping
interested especially when things got too busy for me to take time to write or call.

Finally, I am saving the best for last, my boyfriend Patrick Carey. The last three
and a half years we have been through our share of ups and downs. With my long work
hours on the farm, many papers due, more meetings to attend, even more presentations to
prepare, and countless trips to Blacksburg any of those could have been a reason to leave,
but you have supported me until the end. Having you there believing in me has been the
driving force through most everything. You have always said, “I know you can do it.”
Well, look at that…you were right. 😊 I have!
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