

## Healing Hero

Lori McCard's relationship with Hero started long before she saw him in the pasture more than a year ago. For years, Lori had not only trained and competed with Hero, but she had also formed a very special bond with the horse. When Lori's hectic schedule no longer allowed her enough time to work with Hero, she sold him to a family with children. After several years, he eventually ended up in a pasture without the kind of care and attention he needed. When the family made the tough decision to find a new home for Hero, they remembered how much Lori had loved the horse and the strong bond that had existed between the two. That's when she got the call. Would she be willing to take him? The decision was easy.

When Lori went to pick up Hero, she saw him standing in a pasture and immediately knew there was something wrong. The horse that had once been her pride and joy was now an animal she barely recognized. While it had been several years since she had trained him, McCard was unprepared for the dramatic physical changes in the horse. Hero was so underweight she could see his ribs and his haircoat was in such poor condition that he looked brown instead of black.

"I immediately suspected gastric ulcers," says McCard, who is a horse trainer, performance rider and veterinary technician at Ocala Equine Hospital in Ocala, Fla. "The signs were right in front of my eyes. Hero had lost between 200 and 300 pounds, his coat was in terrible condition and he was lethargic. He just didn't look right."

Equine stomach ulcers, also called Equine Gastric Ulcer Syndrome or EGUS, create a painful condition that can reduce your horse's performance and can even lead to death.<sup>1</sup> And wherever there is stress, there can be stomach ulcers. Your horse is sensitive and may experience stress when exposed to situations you would think of as normal. Simply transporting your horse to and from one horse show, feeding him twice a day and giving him light exercise could be enough to develop EGUS.<sup>2</sup> More surprising, your horse can develop stomach ulcers in as few as 5 days.<sup>2</sup>

Working with her local Merial sales representative and the veterinary staff at Ocala Equine Hospital, McCard had Hero scoped to definitively diagnose his condition. Using a 3.5-meter endoscope passed down the esophagus, the veterinarian could see both areas of the horse's stomach. No one was surprised by what they found. Hero had stomach ulcers.

Working with her veterinarian, McCard immediately put Hero on a regimen of GASTROGARD® (omeprazole), a medication that treats equine stomach ulcers and is proven to heal damage to the stomach lining.<sup>3</sup> GASTROGARD is formulated specifically for horses and is the only medication approved by the FDA to treat and heal equine ulcers.

After treatment, Hero's situation improved dramatically, as did his physical appearance. "His coat, weight and physical activity demonstrated he was clearly on the mend. GASTROGARD made all the difference in the world for Hero."

Today, Hero is 11 years old and is a completely different horse. He's back to barrel racing and "attacks the bucket" when it's feeding time. Convinced by her experience with GASTROGARD, McCard now gives Hero ULCERGARD® (omeprazole), a medication that prevents stomach ulcers in horses,<sup>4</sup> prior to every competition.

Because of her experience in the industry and the fact she works for a top U.S. equine practice, McCard is aware of EGUS and how it can affect a horse. "A horse may seem like it is just acting up or doesn't want to perform," says McCard, "but what it may really be trying to tell you is that it may have stomach ulcers."

In addition to missing the signs of equine stomach ulcers, many horse owners simply don't believe their horse is at risk. Based on the results of scopings conducted by Merial across the country in 2009, however, that belief is inaccurate for many horses. Of the 1,532 horses that participated in scoping events throughout the country last year, 922 horses (60 percent) from 37 states had some ulceration identified by scoping. And for racehorses, the numbers were even higher with 226 – or nearly 90 percent of all the racehorses scoped – that had some grade of ulceration.<sup>5</sup>

"Even with top-notch care and regular veterinary visits, many horse owners don't like to think that stomach ulcers may develop in their horses," says April Knudson, DVM, Manager of Merial's Veterinary Services. "But, the results of these scopings confirm what university studies have found previously: horses of all competitive disciplines are at risk for stomach ulcers."

Dr. Knudson recommends ULCERGARD because it is the only product approved by the FDA for the prevention of equine stomach ulcers. During times of stress, one daily dose of ULCERGARD has been proven effective in preventing stomach ulcers over both short and long periods of time.<sup>†6</sup>

For more information about GASTROGARD and ULCERGARD, visit [www.gastrogard.com](http://www.gastrogard.com) and [www.ulcergard.com](http://www.ulcergard.com).

**IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:**

CAUTION: Safety of GASTROGARD in pregnant or lactating mares has not been determined.

ULCERGARD can be used in horses that weigh at least 600 pounds. Safety in pregnant mares has not been determined.

\*When treated for eight to 28 days, ULCERGARD is proven to effectively prevent gastric ulcers in horses exposed to stressful conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Radostits OM, et al. *Veterinary Medicine: A textbook of the diseases of cattle, horses, sheep, pigs and goats*. Philadelphia: WB Saunders Co.; 007:237-241.

<sup>2</sup> McClure, SR, et al. Gastric ulcer development in horses in a simulated show or training environment. *JAVMA* 2005;227(5):775-777.

<sup>3</sup> GASTROGARD product label.

<sup>4</sup> ULCERGARD product label.

<sup>5</sup> Data on file at Merial.

<sup>6</sup> Freedom of Information Summary for ULCERGARD (NADA 141-227).