TCVM NOTES

TCVM for the Treatment of Anhidrosis

Horses depend on the ability to sweat in order to dissipate heat generated during exercise especially in hot climates. Failure to sweat appropriately is known as anhidrosis and is a common problem in hot and humid conditions. To date there is a limited understanding of the pathogenesis of anhidrosis in horses. As would be expected from a failure to sweat, the clinical signs of anhidrosis are those of hyperthermia. In hot, humid conditions, affected horses become tachypneic and rectal temperature may rise as high as 108 degrees Fahrenheit. Clinical signs are exacerbated by exercise, and heat stroke and death have occurred in anhidrotic horses forced to compete. For unknown reasons, chronically affected horses also may have dull hair coats with areas of non-pruritic alopecia. Although there are occasional spontaneous remissions in anhidrotic horses, no consistently effective conventional treatment has been found. Several treatments have been tried such as oral electrolytes, thyroxine, vitamin E, corticosteroids, tyrosine-rich supplement (One AC), methyldopa, primrose oil, beer and prostaglandin F2α, but unfortunately these do not result in successful resolution of the condition. Although this condition is difficult to explain and treat with conventional medicine, traditional Chinese veterinary medicine (TCVM) shows promising effects.

From a TCVM perspective, anhidrosis is considered an Excess Heat condition termed Summer Heat. This is apparent by the typical presentation of a red and dry tongue, fast and superficial pulses, elevated rectal temperature, and elevated respiratory rate. As previously mentioned many of these horses have dull and dry hair coats, which is common with an Excess Heat pattern. One of the most important treatment strategies for anhidrosis is the use of hemacupuncture at Tai-yang, Xiong-tang, Yan-mai, Wei-jie and Wei-ben. All of these acupoints are located on blood vessels and it is imperative to release blood from these points, therefore it is recommended to use a 20 gauge hypodermic needle instead of an acupuncture needle. In addition dry needle at distal points to release the Channel and Heart points to clear Heat are also necessary for treatment and these include HT-7, HT-9, SI-1, LU-11, TH-1, and LI-1. It is also extremely beneficial to use electro-acupuncture at the following points combining: Fei-men and Fei-pan, BL-15 and BL-22 and BL-13 and GB-21 at 40 Hz for 10-15 minutes and 80-120 Hz for 10-15 minutes. It is recommended to perform 4-6 weekly acupuncture treatments and prescribe the herbal formula New Xiang Ru San (Jing Tang herbal; http://tcvmherbal.com) at 30-45 grams orally twice daily for 4-12 weeks. Successful treatment of anhidrosis with TCVM can result in partial to complete resolution of clinical signs and partial to full return to normal sweating. If diagnosed early many horses return to normal sweating and can return to normal work.

Carolina Medina DVM