

***Integrative practice caters to the whole horse with a mix of new and old approaches.***

There is never a dull day for Lisa Grim, DVM, as she makes the rounds in her integrative veterinary practice. Based in North San Diego County and under the Equitage Horse Care banner, she's been serving the region as a mobile vet for over 23 years, responding to something new almost every day and with an unusually broad array of approaches.



Acupuncture, regenerative medicine, laser therapy and advanced dental care are just a few of the tools in a horse care kit comprised of conventional and complementary techniques. She thrives on caring for the whole horse and addressing everything from everyday well-being and comfort to solutions for acute problems, and, above all, preventing them. The breadth of her knowledge and experience equips her to detect issues that often go unnoticed by even the most caring and responsible owner.

A recent example arose when Dr. Grim had loaded a horse into the trailer she uses to perform dental care. She noticed that the 14-year-old mare acted spooky when her assistant was within view in one field of vision, but not when she was elsewhere. That prompted Dr. Grim to examine the mare's eyes, where she found, sadly, the lesions associated with Cushing's disease. "You don't expect that at the mare's age and she had no other symptoms," Dr. Grim notes. "But it was better that we got her on the medicine sooner rather than later to avoid other potential symptoms like laminitis."

Surprising revelations happen often. Her assistant, Melanie Biedebach, attributes that to the unusual breadth of her approach. "I have been around horses and horse people my entire life, and I have never known anybody who has been at the forefront of as many specialties as Dr. Grim. From acupuncture, herbal treatments and her combinations of different aspects of Western and Eastern medicines, it's remarkable."

Dr. Grim's constant search for new ways to help horses led her to formulate Skin Gellie, a natural skin care product for horses with allergies to gnats, aka "sweet itch." At its worst, sweet itch is much more than an irritation. "I've seen cases where horses are miserable and skinny from the constant itching and some where the whole belly is raw," she notes. "Once they lose their hair and over several years, their skin thickens and the hair won't grow back." The common treatment is cortisone shots, but many horses don't respond to that so she is happy to offer an effective and natural remedy that repels gnats and gives the skin a chance to heal itself.

## **Old & New**

The complementary and conventional treatments Equitage provides include the latest in diagnostic and treatment technologies. Class IV laser therapy, digital ultrasonography, digital radiography, regenerative medicine and shockwave therapy are a few examples. Dr. Grim is accredited at the Helen Woodward Animal Center in Rancho Santa Fe where she can perform in-depth procedures or treat patients requiring critical care.



Having so many tools enables Dr. Grim to tailor treatment to each horse. Whenever a natural treatment, like acupuncture or laser therapy, is appropriate, she'll try that first, but she's quick to change approaches if the horse either doesn't like it or it's ineffective.

She came to acupuncture herself as a distance runner with an injury that wasn't responding to other treatments. "I had dramatic results after two treatments, and that's what inspired me to study acupuncture myself so I could offer it to horses." She believes it can be especially effective with horses because they don't have the skepticism that a few people still harbor toward "alternative" medicine. In her experience, acupuncture, used in conjunction with various herbal treatments, can be a very effective part of sporthorse care and one that often lasts longer than conventional methods.

## **Prevention**

Along with her whole horse approach, Dr. Grim advocates preventative care. "Evaluating our

horses and planning ahead is much better than waiting and having to react to issues,” she explains. That’s true for all the horses in her care, whether they are elite athletes, weekend warriors or a backyard buddy.

As with humans, regular check-ups are essential in a proactive approach. Equitage’s Wellness Program provides substantial discounts for owners who subscribe to an annual maintenance plan. This includes two visits a year; a thorough annual physical exam; a nutrition analysis; an acupuncture exam; a complete blood panel; twice a year Flu-Rhino vaccinations; once a year vaccinations for West Nile Virus, encephalitis and tetanus; a complete dental exam and, for geldings, an annual sheath cleaning. Clients appreciate the ability to “budget ahead and have the peace of mind knowing that all their horse’s yearly health care needs are being taken care of.”

A lifelong rider and lover of horses, Dr. Grim acknowledges that horses can be tough customers--literally. They can’t describe their symptoms and they’re stoic. She often discovers serious dental problems that present no symptoms but must be very painful and the owners have not noticed any change. She recently treated a horse with “horrible fractured teeth” and a related chronic infection and the owner thought the horse was totally healthy. That’s not a knock on the owner, she points out, but rather an example of how tough horses can be and how important regular check-ups are for their well-being.

Dr. Grim serves horses throughout San Diego County and in the southern sections of Orange and Riverside counties. She grew up riding and competing in the Del Mar area and feels that veterinary medicine is her calling. “I know my parents just thought I was a horse-crazy girl, but being around horses really has been a huge part of who I am and being a veterinarian is what I feel I am meant to do.”

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*For more information on Lisa Grim and Equitage Horse Care, call 760-634-2144 or visit [www.equitage.com](http://www.equitage.com)*