

AROMA THERAPY IS NOT RESPIRATORY THERAPY

Folks we seem to be getting more and more questions about using essential oils in a nebulizer. I wanted to get the information directly from two specialists as to the danger of this practice.

Lauren Kelland-May wrote a wonderful article in Barrel Horse News last summer on the proper use of essential oils. She is an expert in the field. Her credentials include: Equestrian Skill Builders, Full time Equestrian Canada Official and USEF R Judge. She has been with TERRA Essential Oils for years.

Here is her response to using oils in a nebulizer. **A WORD ABOUT NEBULIZERS** Nebulizers are designed as a method of delivering medication directly into the nose or mouth and into the lungs. Aromatherapy diffusers and essential oils are powerful and are meant to deliver the essential oils aromatically throughout a room rather than prolonged direct inhalation directly into the lungs. Essential oils are lipophilic. This means they do not dissolve in water. This allows them to pass membranes efficiently. The challenge with using essential oils with a nebulizer is there is only one cell membrane thickness for them to cross. The ability to cross membranes makes essential oils very potent but the use in a nebulizer for a thirty-minute session could cause damage due to the presence and prolonged use of a certain chemical in the particular essential oil. Short direct inhalations of essential oils, from your hand, will provide adequate distribution and is a safe way to include essential oils into your horse care protocols.

Nancy Graf has 27 years' experience as a Certified Respiratory Therapist. She has been an educator in the field, has worked on numerous clinical research projects, has won several awards in the field and has also sat on several boards in the field of Respiratory Therapy. Nancy is also on our advisory board. Here is what Nancy has to say about the practice.

Essential Oils and Direct Nebulization into the Lungs

I'll start this by saying I am not an expert on essential oils or their effects. I am, however, very experienced with nebulization, the causes of bronchospasm and the effects of volatile organic compounds (VOC) on the lungs. VOC is a term given to a broad category of chemicals that range from industrial solvents to plant-based oils. Essential oils fall into this category and they do release VOCs. Along with VOCs, they also contain strong aromatic properties that may contribute to the information below. Breathing conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in humans are similar to heaves/COPD in horses. These conditions can have airway sensitivity caused by a variety of triggers. Common known triggers of airway sensitivity are VOCs and strong fragrances. In other words, conditions such as these usually have heightened sensitivity to fragrances and may cause worsening symptoms (sometimes life threatening) when exposed to them. This is especially concerning when directly nebulized into the lungs of an animal (or human) who is already suffering from difficulty breathing, inflammation and bronchospasm. Arguably, aromatherapy and essential oils have their place and contribute to health in many positive ways. It was stated best by Brent Bauer, M.D., director of the Complementary and Integrative Medicine program at the Mayo Clinic, "Whatever is powerful enough to exert a beneficial effect in the body is powerful enough to exert a negative effect." Until studies and

evidenced based practices are established for the use of essential oils in this manner or without direction from your veterinarian, and for the safety of your horse I would advise against this route of administration.

So there you have it. Two people who know the process from both sides.

Equi-Resp is dedicated to helping educate people on the benefits and proper use of nebulizers and the dangers of using products not specifically designed for nebulization. This is another reason we have developed our advisory board. We want to ensure you get the best and latest information possible on Respiratory Therapy. This is our goal and our promise to you.