

Teddy Bear

A New Horse Owner Takes On A Challenge And Everyone Wins!

Meet Teddy Bear

QH/TW Cross - foaled about 1992 - 15.1 hands

July 2010 Jen writes...



somehow these things got him to Auction. In August 2009 he already looked like he was getting ready for winter. He wasn't really long and curly, but he was definitely fuzzier than he should be. My farrier mentioned Cushing's and I had no clue what that was. So, I made an appointment for a screening and started researching.

In September, his ACTH level came back at 91.5. The vet suggested re-testing later since we were in the "seasonal high" and to consider pergolide as treatment. So, after an email to my farrier, she referred me to the ECIR group. Again, overwhelming info, hay testing, mineral balancing...people really *did* this?

At first I was too overwhelmed to think about hay testing. Was it really worth it? Did I have to do it every time I got hay? Ugh. Then the mineral balancing; my head spun. I was a new horse owner, basically pushed into a pool of metabolic disorders and diet changes that I had no clue about. Beet pulp? Soaking hay? Wow, my day just got A LOT longer.

I read everything, attending anything that had to do with metabolic disorders and finally broke down and did hay testing in Jan 2010. That was the best decision I ever made. With some help from a list member, I had his new diet. It wasn't so bad and would also benefit our other horse, Hero, who arrived in November of '09. He is a cresty breed and a super easy keeper, so any changes for Teddy would be good for him too. That eased some of the tension; not mixing up or keeping track of two diets is a time saver.

The next worry was whether he would eat this non-molasses beet pulp? The hay cubes? Boy, did I get lucky in some ways. He loved the beet pulp and the hay cubes. But, then came the look of disgust when the minerals were added. But, again after some guidance, I made small steps, starting with smaller amounts and working him up to the amount he should be getting.

April 2010: The vet came out at the end of the month; pulls his ACTH and calls me with the result of 37.5!! I had to ask twice. The vet said, "I don't know what you did, but keep doing it. It will be better for him to have the pergolide option still open and not have to search for more help to manage him if we run out of other options." So yes, you read right, he is not on pergolide at this time. The education that comes with this entire experience and the ECIR group is another benefit. Learning how to pick out hay and why it is good to test makes sense. There are good horse pros around you; a great barefoot farrier, a dentist, etc. I was referred to a wonderful trainer that has helped me learn stretches for his back muscles and great



ground work, etc., to keep him moving. Walks are the best not only for exercise, but some good quality time and it doesn't seem like work.

The other thing is read, read, read and keep trying! Yes, it is worth it in the end, even on those sleepless nights with hay numbers and minerals bouncing around in your mind. Those moments when you think, "This will never work." How can something so simple work? For such a simple thing, at times, it seemed so complicated. It really isn't when you see the end result.

In closing I can't say I was a full out skeptic, but I wasn't fully on board at either. I thought, "Well he doesn't have laminitis issues" or "He doesn't have any signs other than the coat, maybe I can wait." But boy am I sure glad I decided to jump in early!



My boy is happy, healthy, and looks amazing. His muscles still need some building, but he will get there. I know the day will come when he needs more support and pergolide; but it is worth every minute of frustration or debate inside my mind, because it works. I know I will continue to build on what I have learned and it will only get better and easier even when his condition gets harder for us both.

Thanks, ECIR!

Jen, Teddy Bear and Hero

Supported by Jen's horse keeping practices, Teddy Bear successfully negotiated the seasonal rise in 2009. Careful monitoring of symptoms and regular blood work will keep Jen aware of changes and the need of pergolide in the future.

