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SORTING THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF WHEN SEEKING NUTRITIONAL ADVICE

Experts, real and self-proclaimed, abound in every aspect of the horse world, including equine nutrition. They tout impressive sounding titles or have a string of degrees following their names, yet one expert's advice may conflict with another's, making it difficult to judge whose advice is right for your horse.

Degrees and certifications are generally earned from accredited colleges, universities, or schools of veterinary medicine; the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists also offers a reputable certification in equine nutrition. So before taking advice at face value, examine the expert's credentials. Look at the school from which this person graduated and make certain it not only exists, but is accredited by a reputable accrediting agency.

An example of misleading "credentials" appeared recently in a prominent internet magazine. The author claimed to be a "certified holistic practitioner." But the certifying institute is not found via a Google search. And the expertise the author offers is virtually self-taught through several years of experience using holistic equine therapies. Advice from someone with this type of credential, or lack thereof, is what you should ignore.

Keep in mind that a person with an advanced degree, preferably a master's degree or doctorate, has many years of training and research in the field. A two-year program, or even a bachelor's degree, is just not enough time to delve into all of the biochemistry, endocrinology, gastroenterology, and physiology required to become truly qualified to evaluate a horse's nutritional status.

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Anyone can call himself a nutritionist. Anyone. Be sure that the person you are trusting with your horse's nutritional care has a reputable degree earned by investing years of study specific to nutrition.

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