

Portuguese Company Added to Team Member Roster

With the signing of a new company in Portugal, Kentucky Equine Research (KER) further bolsters its presence in Europe. Intacol SA becomes KER's first Team Member with in the country. In addition to distribution throughout Portugal, Intacol also services feed dealers and farms in Morocco.

The company maintains its headquarters in Sobralinho, Alverca. At these premises, the most advanced technology is used to create products that exceed the highest international standards for manufacturing. For instance, Intacol has pioneered micronization in Portugal, and is the only feed company in the country to implement this processing technique. Micronization increases the digestion and absorption efficiency of certain cereal grains, thus increasing their effectiveness in delivering nutrition.

For more than 15 years, Intacol has been providing the horsemen of Portugal and Morocco with feeds that are well known for their high-quality ingredients and production precision. With the help of KER's team of equine nutritionists, it will now infuse the latest in technological advances into every bag.

"We are very excited to be working with Intacol, a partner committed to producing innovative feeds that maximize the performance of horses while promoting optimal health. Intacol is also dedicated to a higher level of customer service," said Florencia Arrambide, general manager of KER International.

Recalibrating the Old

The first order of business for KER was the reformulation of Intacol's current line of feeds. This required special consideration by KER professionals, who used local raw ingredients to formulate feeds. While these ingredients may seem unusual to horsemen in other continents, Portuguese horsemen expect to find them in their feedstuffs.

Locust beans, known in the region as algarroba, are one such ingredient. Harvested from carob or locust trees, the beans have been grown around the Mediterranean Sea for thousands of years. A long pod encases not only the small beans but also a sweet edible pulp. After a drying period, the beans and pulp are separated from the pods, and the pods are then ground into flour. Because the pods are rich in sugar, they are palatable to horses and other livestock. In the equine feed industry, ground locust bean pods are used primarily as a flavoring agent, much as molasses is employed in the United States and other areas of the world. In fact, locust bean pods were used as a source of sugar before sugarcane and sugar beets became widely available for commercial purposes.

"Locust bean pods have a high sugar content, so horses love



to eat them. They taste like chocolate but have no caffeine," said longtime KER formulation expert Mike Lennox.

Horsemen in Portugal assign great value to free-flowing feeds, with sticky or clumpy feeds deemed undesirable. Because of the environmental heat (Portugal is one of the warmest European countries, boasting temperatures of 86° to 95° F, sometimes reaching more than 105° F) and processing techniques, molasses is often too soupy to be used in feeds that would appeal to the horsemen of the area.

Another ingredient uncommon in North American feeds but prevalent in those formulated in Portugal is field peas. As with locust bean pods, most horses find these legumes to be extremely tasty.

From a nutritional standpoint, field peas—high in energy and protein—typically replace a portion of the cereal grains used in feeds. Field peas have approximately the same energy content as oats, and contain significant amounts of lysine, an amino acid important for growth in young horses. Because cereal grains usually contain more methionine, another essential amino acid, than lysine, the grains work synergistically with field peas to deliver high-quality protein.

"Peas are used because they supply proportions of energy and protein that coincide nicely with the nutrient needs of the horse. Cereal grains have a lot of energy and less protein, while soybeans have a lot of protein and not much energy. Peas fall in the middle," said Lennox. "North Americans use more soybeans than peas because more soybeans are grown on this continent."

In addition to small crop size, use of field peas may be hindered by a paucity of research conducted exclusively on horses. Limited research suggests they could be a beneficial component of feeds. At Dickinson State University in North Dakota, 24 Quarter Horse yearlings were used in an 84-day study designed to determine the worthiness of field peas in rations for young horses. Researchers measured body weight, body length, wither height, hip height, heart girth circumference, cannon bone circumference, forearm circumference, and gaskin muscle circumference every 28 days. By and large, no growth differences were noted between yearlings fed field peas and those not fed the legume. Researchers concluded that field peas are a safe and palatable source of energy and protein for young stock horses.

Feeds for the Future


In addition to fine-tuning Intacol's current line of feeds, KER developed five new feeds. Two are designated for breeding stock. The first, called Young, is intended for foals and weanlings, and the second, named Breeding, is appropriate for gestating and lactating mares, breeding stallions, and young stock including yearlings. Both feeds contain more fat and fiber than traditional feeds formulated for growing horses.

Two of the new feeds are geared toward performance horses. Power Up delivers the nutrients essential for top-notch performance, regardless of the sport. Enduro, on the other hand, is manufactured specifically for horses involved in endurance sports. As a high-fat, high-fiber feed, Enduro elicits a low glycemic response, which may enhance performance of equine athletes.

The final feed is Balance, a pelleted feed that contains state-of-the-art vitamin and mineral fortification. Balance is especially useful when large groups of horses are fed straight grains. Because straight grains cannot provide all horses with sufficient vitamin and mineral nutrition, Balance picks up the slack, ensuring vital dietary elements are delivered. Amount of Balance given depends on the life stage of the horse.

Marketing Strategies

Product branding is paramount, regardless of the product. As such, KER marketing specialists worked doubly hard to freshen the company's image, particularly in terms of packaging.

Florencia Arrambide collaborated with Sheri Wood, KER's graphic artist, to create bold new packaging for Intacol's feeds, both old and new. Bags and product sheets (brochures that detail the product's purpose, nutrient specifications, and ingredients) will feature a redesigned, modernized logo. 

Lusitanos Consider Portugal Home

Portugal (from the Roman name *portus cale* meaning "beautiful port") is the westernmost country in continental Europe. Flanked by two sizable geographic landmarks—Spain to the north and east and the Atlantic Ocean to the south and west—Portugal envelops two archipelagos (groups of small, scattered islands) in the Atlantic Ocean.

A hallmark of the equine landscape in Portugal is the Lusitano breed, which maintains a rich history. Much like their cousins the Andalusians, Lusitanos have powerful conformation that makes them incredibly adept for the agility required not only for mounted bullfighting in Portugal but a host of other equestrian pursuits.

Noted author and trainer of Lusitano horses Sylvia Loch describes the breed this way: "To look at, they are noble rather than pretty with aristocracy written all over their fine, slightly hawked long faces. They develop a powerful neck and shoulder which makes them look extremely majestic in front. The quarters are not large, but the loins are wide and strong and the hocks long and wiry, giving them the power to bounce forcefully forwards with masterful impulsion. Deep flexion is obtained from the developed second thigh and the longer than usual cannons and pasterns."

Lusitanos are used extensively in sporthorse pursuits. Because of their exaggerated hock action behind and elevated movement in front, Lusitanos have found marked success in dressage arenas the world over.

Portuguese horsemen are proud of the noble Lusitanos, but the athleticism and beauty of the breed are garnering admiration from horsemen throughout Europe and in other continents.





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