

## **Complete holistic care and healing for horses. The owner's veterinary guide to alternative methods and remedies.**

Mary L. Brennan DVM

Review by Deborah Goodwin BSc PhD

(Word Count 488)

This is a very interesting book for any owner interested in alternative therapies for horses. It will also be a useful introduction to the field for veterinary students. Mary Brennan discusses many established and some recent treatment methods. She provides many anecdotes about the treatment of her own horses as well as those of her clients. Therefore, I make no apology for adding one of my own. Like many of Mary Brennan's clients I first ventured to try homeopathic treatment for one of my horses when my vet decided there was nothing more that he could do for him using conventional methods. I would encourage other owners to consider suspending their scepticism, as although I still do not fully understand how homeopathy works, this appears to have been no barrier to its effectiveness for my horses.

This book discusses alternative health care for horses in their general maintenance, as well as during illness and so provides a useful reference resource. The care and management section is, however, angled more to management systems prevalent in America than the UK. As a Research Fellow in equine behaviour I would have liked to see more emphasis in that section placed on encouraging adaptive natural equine behaviour through promoting turn out in stable social groups, or enriching the stable environment. However, increased turn out is often not possible for owners at livery stables in the US or UK. Therefore, Mary Brennan's book will help owners manage their horses' welfare under the restrictive management conditions that are imposed in some Livery yards.

I was pleased to read that Mary Brennan does not treat alternative therapy as a universal panacea but presents a balanced discussion of its role and refers to conventional therapies where appropriate. Having studied the effects of parasitic infections in horses during my Doctorate, I was pleased to see that Mary does recommend conventional anthelmintic treatment. However, rather than changing wormer after every second treatment, I would personally recommend a worming programme in the UK using annual rotation of chemically unrelated background wormers, with timely treatment against tapeworms and bots, as a way of reducing the risk of multiple resistance to wormers. As this is a book on holistic care I would also have liked to see more emphasis placed on the importance of pasture hygiene in breaking the transmission cycle.

Legislation in the US and the UK prescribes who can provide treatment for animals and so Mary Brennan includes information to help owners choose health care professionals who are qualified to treat their horses. She also highlights the importance of veterinary diagnosis before owners treat their own animals, so that they may be certain what conditions they are dealing with. Her reference sections on common horse ailments, alternative therapies, information resources, product suppliers, and organisations will be of great value to owners who wish to use alternative remedies to treat their horses, or to provide additional support alongside conventional treatments.