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**R**eporting in his Sports Medicine column in the December, 1996 issue of The Quarter Racing Journal, William E. Jones, DVM tells of a study presented to the Association for Equine Sports Medicine which met in Bonn, Germany earlier that year. He says that:

*"A study headed by Anna Jansson...found that racehorses do not receive enough salt from salt blocks in their stalls...Jansson was surprised to learn that horses did not increase their salt intake during more intense exercise. [In fact], the amount of salt ingested **did not even cover the estimated maintenance requirement** and shows that the intake of salt from salt blocks is not a reliable route to compensate for salt losses in the exercising horse.*

*Dr. Lon Lewis, in his book "Equine Clinical Nutrition,"... recommends that **loose trace mineral salt** be used for the added benefit of minerals such as zinc, manganese, iron, copper, cobalt and iodine. These minerals play an important part in physiological activities of the cells in muscles and other tissue." [emphasis added]*

Salt blocks were originally designed for rough-tongued cattle rather than smooth-tongued horses. Horses desperate for salt or minerals have been known to gnaw on the blocks resulting in both TMJ (temporal-mandibular joint) Syndrome similar to humans (the symptoms of which can include both pain and emotional stress), but also in an over- or under-supply of what is being sought. Furthermore, blocks contain bleached salt, bleach residues, glues and binders which many find unacceptable for equine ingestion.

According to "The Value of Real Salt" published by the Grain and Salt Society,

*"...in the industrial refining process, as many as 82 trace minerals and essential macro nutrients are forcibly removed, leaving only a single compound made of sodium and chlorine. Refined white salt is a biologically changing, completely unnatural and chemicalized substance. Refinery salt may legally receive up to 2% of chemical additives,*

*such as bleaches, anti-caking agents, and conditioners. Ferrocyanide, yellow prussiate of soda, tricalcium phosphate, aluminocalcium silicate, sodium aluminosilicate, are anti-caking agents whose role is to prevent the salt from mixing with water, in the box or in the body. **This prevents the salt from doing one of its important functions on the organism.**" [emphasis added]*

So-called "mineral blocks" are really standard bleached-salt blocks with coloring and a very few inorganic minerals added.

While salt is vital, it should **never** be forced but only fed free choice. Unfortunately, some vets suggest adding salt to grain rations of colicky horses thinking it will encourage sufficient water consumption if the colic was due to impaction or insufficient water intake; either of which certainly can happen. In actuality, excess sodium will suppress potassium necessary for carbohydrate metabolism and thyroid function (both of which are important for weight control), nerve transmission (low pain tolerance) and fluid regulation (edema) in the body.

If you find your horse eating large amounts of **NTM Salt**, it may be trying to detox or else looking for trace minerals. Make sure **Izmine** is also available free choice or even add 1 oz to feed.

In their search for loose, natural salt, some horse owners have purchased "gray salt" or evaporated sea salt. Unfortunately, in this modern era, our seas are pollutant laden and it seems to us that such pollutants could easily leave residues in formerly safe sea salt. Rather than bleached and bound salt blocks, or possibly pollutant-laden gray salt/sea salt, we have chosen to use instead the **DYNAMITE<sup>®</sup> loose, Natural Trace Mineral (NTM) Salt** mined from pollutant-free, pure ancient sea beds and put into buckets for the horses without any further processing. The trace minerals in it are perfectly and naturally balanced for the sodium content.

NTM SALT CAN ALSO BE USED in the house as a super tub soak or as a poultice or soak preferable to Epsom Salts and is available in a finer grind for human kitchen use. ■