

Athletic Performance and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy
Veterinary Hyperbaric Medicine Society
Position Statement
August, 2009

The mission of the Veterinary Hyperbaric Medicine Society (VHMS) is to promote the theory and application of hyperbaric medicine in the therapy of animal diseases through education and research. The position of the VHMS on the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy in performance horses is characterized by the following points.

- The use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy has the potential to accelerate the normal healing process and thus the potential to enhance the health and welfare of the horse.
- There is no evidence that the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy prior to exercise affects the performance of the equine athlete. Furthermore, research in human hyperbaric medicine indicates that there is no performance enhancement, even when hyperbaric therapy is administered immediately prior to exercise.
- Oxygen administered by hyperbaric means or by nasal cannula is not any different from oxygen obtained from breathing air at normal atmospheric pressure, other than there is just more of it. The increase in blood and tissue oxygen concentration following hyperbaric therapy is extremely short lived and may be as short as sixty minutes in most tissues and even as short as five minutes in the blood.

The VHMS has the welfare of the horse as a primary directive. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy should always be considered as another important tool in the treatment of equine diseases and rehabilitation of the injured equine athlete. The use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy may, in some cases, save patients in which conventional therapy has not been successful.