



Reading Labels – Part 3 – Quality...This Info Generally Isn't On The Label

I *thought* I was finished. I *celebrated* being finished, in fact... and then I thought about product quality and security.

How do you know if the product you are looking at contains what it says it does; only a fraction of what it says it has; or way more than it is supposed to have? And even more alarmingly, how do you know it doesn't contain contaminants that aren't supposed to be there?

There was an interesting study presented at the AAEP (American Associate of Equine Practitioners), several years ago, in which a number of nutraceuticals were analysed and their results compared with label claims. Those products were found to contain anywhere from 10-200% of the active ingredients that they were supposed to have. Apparently, this is a more wide-spread problem than you would think or hope.

To bring that home for you, many people will have heard of the tragic, fatal cases of selenium toxicity that occurred a few years ago in a group of polo ponies fed a feed that was made with far too much selenium. The manufacturer had simply made an error in calculations and had put a decimal in the wrong place, resulting in 10 or 100 times the selenium being added to a batch of feed.

A few years ago, the trace-element, cobalt, made the news. Required for normal health in trace amounts, excessive levels constitute a positive test. Several cobalt positives were investigated by racing authorities. In some of the cases, injectable products were found to be at fault, but in one, a powdered feed supplement, that contained cobalt levels far in excess of label claims, was implicated.

As racing authorities did not know how much cobalt could be fed before a positive test was produced, Pro-Dosa International Ltd conducted a cobalt clearance study using commonly used feedstuffs. The results were interesting, and you may wish to read them here. Following that study in 2016, cobalt was eliminated from the Pro-Dosa BOOST formulation. Despite that, we still test our raw ingredients and finished product for cobalt, to reassure horsemen and racing authorities that Pro-Dosa BOOST will never produce a positive test.

Almost everyone in racing will know of someone who has ended up with a caffeine positive as a result of feed contamination, and I believe there was a recent case in European equestrian circles in which a feed, contaminated with poppy seeds, resulted in a positive test and the disqualification of a prominent horse and competitor.

So, how *do* you know if a product is manufactured safely and meets label claims?

This information frequently isn't on the label, but it's just as important as the ingredients list, so it's well worthwhile to make the effort to source the information. You could look for a statement on the website about quality management, or you might have to ask the manufacturer some questions. Does the manufacturer have a quality management program? GMP or ISO certification provides hard evidence of this.

Tip: Be sure to ask every rep that visits your stable about quality management as they will almost certainly be the most readily available source for this information. That will also be a simple way to separate the wheat from the chaff. Any rep that can't talk competently about their company's quality management program probably represents a company that doesn't have one.

GMP stands for Good Manufacturing Practice, and this is a specific standard required for pharmaceutical producers. It is, however, voluntary for feed supplement manufacturers. A generic version of good manufacturing practice, abbreviated with small "gmp", is a reference to a quality management system that is not name-brand, government specified and inspected, GMP. It could be the same as GMP or it could be applied to a non-standardised or less complete quality system.

Compliance with a name-brand GMP program ensures that quality is built into the product at the time of manufacture and provides assurance that products are consistently manufactured from quality inputs; in a safe and clean environment; by trained and diligent staff; using carefully defined procedures. It is a means of giving consumers confidence that products meet the required quality standards, are safe, and are reliable. A documentation trail that links starting materials, through the various manufacturing processes, to the finished product confirms that dispatched product has been approved through quality control measures. It also ensures that product can be tracked and recalled if any issues arise.

ISO9001/22000 refer to slightly different quality management standards that do not relate directly to pharmaceutical production but that cover many of the same principles. They demonstrate a commitment by management to food safety, and they ensure that consideration of potential hazards and critical processes have been considered in the development of the product and production procedures.

If a company has either ISO or GMP certification, you can be sure that the supplements they produce will be safe, secure, and generally meet label claims.

If a manufacturer lacks certification, it doesn't mean they aren't doing a fabulous job of quality management. They might have a written statement about their commitment to quality management or you might have to ask some questions to be sure. If at least some proportion of finished product undergoes analysis for common contaminants, the concentration of active ingredients, and microbial testing, it will likely be safe. If no testing is done, and the company doesn't talk about product quality, safety, and security, I'd worry.

FYI, Pro-Dosa International Ltd. is GMP certified by the Government of New Zealand, Ministry for Primary Industries, Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines group. Our quality management system has been in place since 2005, and it was originally developed along GMP, ISO22000, and ISO9001 standards. The whole team is very proud of our standards, and we would be happy to tell you all about what we do, if you really want to know.

Visit our youtube channel, Pro-Dosa TV, for more information!