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Top 5 Tips to Calmness

Diet Research has shown sugar in horses' diets causes a significant increase in 'excitable behaviour'. Many horses, including my own endurance horses, do not need sugar for additional energy, digestible fibre such as unmolassed chaff and sugarbeet can provide all their energy requirements. (Always read the feed bag label for sugar and starch content, consult your vet for further advice).

Stressors Stress can result in emotional and behavioural problems. Eliminating stressors from a horse's life is important for calmness and happiness. Stressors can include isolation / lack of company, stabling, lack of ad lib forage, changes in routines and herd regrouping.

Speed Increasing speed usually increases arousal. For example, when riding do not increase speed unless your horse is calm at walk. If, when you trot he becomes tense, go back to walk. Many horses will need to learn this somewhere quiet when they are already calmer.

Small steps In order to desensitize a horse to environments and objects that make him anxious, it is necessary to expose them to him at levels below which elicits anxiety. Then increase exposure in small steps. E.g., start in quiet environments and over time build to more busy and stressful environments.

Punishment Aversives, such as shouting, smacking and pressure halters, can create fear and anxiety, therefore compounding a stressful situation. A calm confident owner will help a horse feel relaxed.