

## My First Horse

How my horse became the world's largest termite.

By Angie Bryant

The Impersonator...

To briefly review the subject of my last article, published in the fall 2003 issue of ec magazine; I got a horse, his name is Levi, and he's a clown. OK, now that you're up to speed... not only is Levi a clown, he also impersonates little bugs! Levi

Are you ready for this? Levi can impersonate... (remember, he is 1,240 lbs and he is talented) a creature (we're going to do a little Taxonomy here) from the Order Isoptera and Suborder Afontanella (I'm pretty sure this suborder is correct, as one prerequisite is "soldiers with large teeth." (Yep, Levi qualifies here) And, I am positive the Family is Eatusfencus. That was a clue, read it slow. No guesses, anyone? Folks we are talking a TERMITE here! A BIG, HUNGRY termite! Eatusfencus is not a real taxonomic Family when describing equine "termites," but, they will eat your fencus, I Guarantee!

You'll know your horse has this talent when you look at your board fences or wood barn and discover chew spots everywhere. Do not call the pest control man. You can eradicate this monster with your own two hands and a little help from your friendly Equine Nutrition Consultant. Hey, that's me!

He's BIG, HUNGRY and can do remodeling for you!

Let's go back and fill in the details.

Levie is a 12 -year-old, 16.1, registered Quarter Horse gelding, weighing in at a stout 1,240 lbs. Remember my angel of a friend, Tracey, who took Levi in until I could find a permanent place to board him? Well, we need to include her again... "Hey, Tracey!"

While Levi was enjoying the pampering at Tracey's, he got a little carried away, and started to remodel some of her fence boards. These boards had peaks and valleys that would rival the background of any western movie scene! I was horrified at the thought! How could my baby do this, doesn't he know that this is wrong? What was he thinking? Heck, what was Tracey thinking? Well, turns out, it wasn't all Levi's fault, and it was up to me to find a solution to the problem.

Forage, I like it, I love it, I want some more of it...

The condition where horses eat things abnormal for them to ingest is called PICA. This condition can cause your horse great harm and can be

quite dangerous. It comes about primarily from horses not getting enough FORAGE. Whether hay or pasture, forage IS and SHOULD BE the cornerstone of your horse's diet. After water, forage is the next most important nutrient source. Horses require a minimum of 1% of their body weight (BW) in forage. Levi, for example, at 1,240 lbs, needs (for ease of calculating round to a whole pound) 13 lbs MINIMUM, while 1-2% of BW is the recommended norm. Now, the higher range of Levi's requirement is 15 lbs! Levi was just not able to get enough pasture, and the hay I gave him, although it totaled about 20 lbs/day wasn't sufficient enough to supply him what his body needed. Hence the pica. Because pastures aren't always idyllic, we may have to substitute with hay or chopped forage products.

Another juicy bit of information: horses can eat approximately 2 lbs of grass for every hour spent on pasture-REAL pasture. So, again, using Levi at 1,240 lbs, instead of providing 13-15 lbs of hay, I can use hay to complement my pasture. Therefore, if I keep him out for 8 hours, at 2 lbs per hour, that comes to 16 lbs!

There are always exceptions to the rules. During winter, grass holds little to no nutritional value for the horse, and we will have to provide hay to meet their vitamin/mineral/energy needs.

Bottom line: take good care of your pastures (soil test, fertilize, etc.) and they will take good care of your wallet by not forcing you to purchase so much hay in winter or so many boards to replace the chewed-up fences and barns! And don't forget – your horse will thank you, too.

Want to learn more about fiber forage and horse horse's nutrition needs? Read more from Seminole Equine Nutrition Consultant Angie Bryant at [www.ecmagazine.net](http://www.ecmagazine.net), and click on THE 1,240-LB TERMITE.

### Enough Forage?

Nutrition Experts agree: Forage is more important for your horse than feed, supplements or any other fancy equine product on the market! Your horses need to eat enough forage (in pasture or hay) to equal a minimum of 1-2% of their bodyweight. Are you feeding enough forage?

1,000-lb horse needs 10 to 12 lbs of pasture or hay (or a combination) every day. Without this forage, your horse could develop pica and begin chewing on boards or barns, or the horse could experience impaction in the intestine, leading to possible colic.