

ABU PRESENTATION

THE AFFECTS OF LOOSING DARK SKIES

Light at night can adversely affect horses, people, and pastures. We have all seen horses grow winter coats and then shed-out in the spring. We also see mare and stallion behavioral changes going into Spring. Likewise, pastures store their energy in the roots during the dark winters, giving them the energy to bloom during longer summer days.

There is also a diurnal [24-hour] clock, which affects all mammals, including horses. This circadian rhythm impacts a horse's athleticism, peak times for muscle function, optimal times to eat and sleep, hormone production, etc. There are various studies that have examined specific relationships between light and health. For example, police horses exposed to noise and light at night may colic more often than police horses working in a natural night setting. This raises questions about how people and their horses can reduce potential health problems as they age in our urbanized environments where dark skies at night are no longer the norm.