

Fast facts on Nutrition

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An overweight horse is not a happy horse:

Don't overfeed your horse as obesity in horses can place excess stress on limbs and joints and can lead to other problems such as lethargy. Obesity is also regarded as a contributory factor in diseases such as insulin resistance, laminitis and metabolic syndrome.



Forage should come first:

Adequate forage (hay) intake is important even for performance horses. You should avoid feeding less than 1% of a horse's bodyweight as forage e.g. 5kg for a 500kg horse. This can be increased to 1.25 -1.5% for haylage to account for the greater water content.



Clean forage and bedding is essential:

Both hay and bedding can harbour dust, moulds and mycotoxins (toxic substances produced by moulds). All of these can adversely affect respiratory health and some may suppress your horse's immune system. Well made haylage can reduce the exposure to moulds as the fermentation process inhibits mould growth.

Grazing is not always a balanced diet:

Grass, whilst being an excellent source of forage for horses, can often be lacking in adequate levels of vitamins and minerals. Some form of supplementation from a feed, balancer, mineral block, or a daily vitamin and mineral supplement is prudent for horses at grass 24/7.

Feed quantities:

Feeds and balancer products are designed to be fed at a certain minimum level to provide an adequate intake of vitamins and minerals. If you are feeding below this guidance level because your horse does not require greater amounts, you may need to choose a product that recommends a lower level of intake (see table)

Minimum level of intake*			
	Bodyweight (kg)	Traditional Mix / Cube	Balancer
Pony	250kg	1.5kg	250g
Horse	500kg	3.0kg	500g

* These figures represent a general guide only and will vary from product to product. Always read the feeding guide, or contact your feed manufacturer for more detailed information

Otherwise feed to maintain good body condition on a little and often basis.

Colic can be fatal:

Certain feeding practices can increase the risk of your horse developing colic. These include: rapid change to the diet, inadequate forage intake, recent change in forage type or batch, high intake of cereal containing concentrate and inadequate water intake.



Good feeding management reduces the risk of laminitis:

Ensuring that your horse or pony stays at its ideal body weight and is not overweight is essential. You may need to diligently limit access to grazing to avoid excessive intake, especially in the spring. Any concentrate feed required should be high in fibre and low in starch and sugars and provide an adequate intake of vitamins and minerals.

Top 20 Feeding Tips

- Feed to maintain good body condition
- Manage access to grazing appropriately
- Feed plenty of forage
- Forage should be non dusty and free from mould
- Avoid feeding hay / haylage on dirt / sandy areas
- Always provide fresh clean water
- Make any changes to feed or forage slowly
- Keep meal size small
- Chaff can be used to slow the rate of eating
- Use cooked cereals for optimum starch digestion
- All proprietary feeds should be within their shelf life
- Provide adequate but not excessive vitamins & minerals
- Feed additional salt for horses in work
- An increase in feed should always follow an increase in exercise or work load
- Choose feeds by their energy content DE (MJ/kg) and not % protein
- Avoid excessive top dressing of balanced feeds with straights e.g. oats
- Keep all feed buckets and bins clean
- Avoid unproven feed supplements
- Always adhere to routine worming and dental checks
- Ask for professional advice when unsure