

MYTH BUSTERS

Myth: Manufacturer's recommended quantities are exaggerated so companies can sell more feed

False - Manufacturers formulate their feeds and set feeding recommendations based on what the intended consumer needs. Under feeding a fortified feed means the diet won't be balanced. If your horse or pony doesn't need the full feeding rate then you can either change to a lower energy feed or top up with a vitamin & mineral supplement or balancer to provide essential nutrients without more energy.

Myth: Horses shouldn't be fed before exercise

False - Horses' stomachs produce acid continuously, regardless of whether feed is present, so withholding forage before exercise can increase the risk of digestive problems like gastric ulcers. It's now recommended to ensure there is fibrous material such as hay or chopped fibre in the horse's stomach when exercising or travelling, to reduce the risk of acid splashing around as the horse moves. Exercising on an empty stomach should be a thing of the past for horses!

Myth: Feeds for laminitis should be molasses free

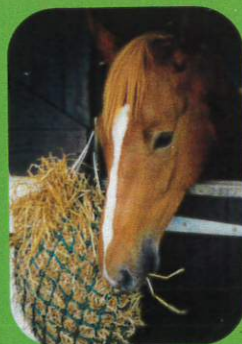
False - Molasses is usually added to feeds at low levels so it only contributes relatively small amounts of sugar to the overall feed. The more relevant detail when determining the suitability of a feed for a horse or pony prone to laminitis is the non-structural carbohydrate (NSC) content - this is made up of water soluble carbohydrate, which includes sugar and storage sugars, plus starch. This information may be provided on the bag label or on a company's website. If a manufacturer is stating their feed is suitable for horses and ponies prone to laminitis they must be able to provide you with the NSC value if you contact them.

Myth: Haylage is always higher in protein than hay

False - The nutrient levels in forage are determined by the plant species and varieties included, age of the plants at time of harvest and the climatic conditions rather than how the forage is conserved. Forage analysis can provide some insight as to how nutritious a forage is.

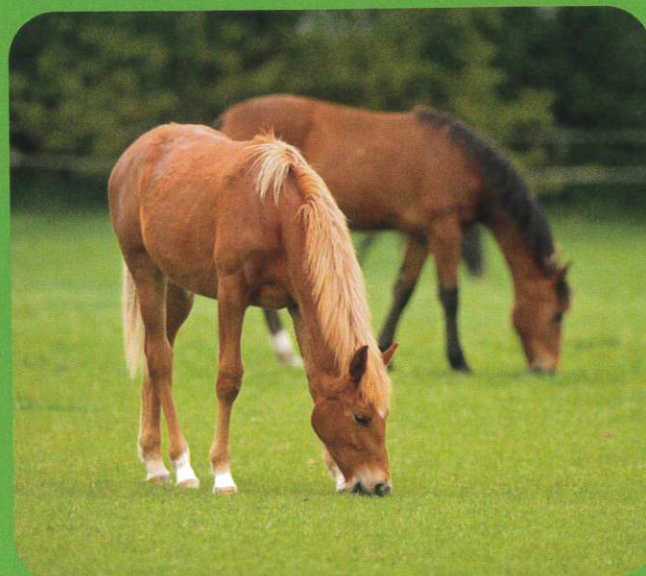
Fabulous Fibre

Horses and ponies should receive at least 1.5% of their bodyweight as forage per day. Haylage usually contains more water than hay and so it may be necessary to feed more on an 'as fed' basis to ensure sufficient fibre is supplied in the diet. A high fibre diet helps to support digestive health and reduce the risk of issues such as gastric ulcers.



BETA Myth Busters!

The expert equine nutritionists who make up the BETA Feed Committee have shared their top tips and advice to help bust some of the most common myths relating to feeding horses.



FEEDING TIPS

- If your horse is lacking in energy, ensure they aren't overweight and check their diet is balanced before introducing higher energy feeds.
- Fats and oils are a source of slow-release energy and contain about 2.25 times more energy than carbohydrates - they can be a useful way to increase energy (calorie) intake for fizzy or excitable horses.
- Sudden changes in diet and management such as stabling for longer can compromise digestive health and

efficiency - make any changes gradually so your horse has time to adjust.

- Horses should be fed by weight not volume - as a guide a large Stubbs scoop holds 1.5-2kgs of a cube, 1.5kgs of mix and 0.3-0.5kg of a chopped fibre feed.
- It's important to weigh forage too - as it often makes up a big proportion of the diet, it's important to know how much is being consumed. Invest in a spring balance for easier weighing!

Calorie Counting

- Energy values are measured in mega joules for horse feed - 1 Mega Joule is a million joules.
- Calories is the old term for measuring energy but it is often still used to describe which feeds might help to promote weight gain or weight loss as we're more familiar with the concept of a calorie-controlled diet rather than an energy-controlled one!
- Quick release or slow release are terms used to describe the source of energy in a feed - cereals contain starch which is a relatively quick release source of energy for the horse and fibre and oil are slow release energy sources.

High Definition

In feed law, supplements and balancers are not recognised definitions. Feeding Stuffs to give them their legal name are divided and defined as follows:

Complementary - to be fed alongside forage

Feed Material - a single ingredient

Mineral - composed mainly of minerals and so wouldn't contain significant levels of nutrients such as protein and fibre

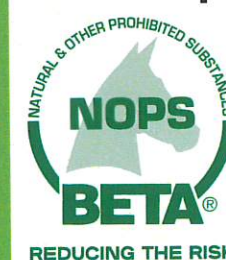
Dietetic - a product intended for legally defined particular nutritional purposes. The product contains ingredients essential to that purpose.

DID YOU KNOW?

- A horse's stomach is about the size of a rugby ball (in a 500kg horse).
- In the wild, horses can cover up to 20 miles per day in search of fresh grazing and water.
- Horses would typically spend around 16-18 hours eating every day.

For more fascinating facts about different ingredients commonly used in horse feeds visit Feed Industry Information - www.beta-uk.org

A Stamp of Approval



NOPS - Natural and Other Prohibited Substances. Membership of this scheme requires feed and supplement producers to implement the highest standards of care to reduce the risk of NOPS finding their way into their products. This is particularly challenging as many NOPS are found naturally in plants commonly found in the countryside and gardens in the UK.

EGUS - This approval mark for horses and ponies prone to gastric ulcers is endorsed by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. Products undergo a rigorous assessment process and can not claim to treat, cure or prevent ulcers as these are things that only medicines can do - the mark recognises those feeds that don't increase the risk of ulcers.



Suitable for equines prone to gastric ulcers as part of a balanced diet



What is....

Molasses?

Molasses is a by-product of the sugar production industry and comes from either sugar beet or sugar cane. It is added to horse feed to aid palatability; the horse has evolved to prefer a sweeter taste. Molasses is usually added to feeds at low levels and so often doesn't contribute very much sugar overall.

A Balancer?

Balancers are nutrient dense feeds fed at much lower rates than traditional mixes and cubes. This means the percentages of certain nutrients such as protein, can look high but the low feeding rates mean the amount supplied is not excessive. It also means the energy (calories) supplied is low making balancers a great choice for good doers.

