

MYTH BUSTERS

Haylage is fattening and should be avoided by owners of fizzy horses and those prone to putting on weight or laminitis.

FALSE Modern methods of haylage production and widespread availability mean that its nutritional value can be as variable as hay. In fact, some hay can be more calorific than haylage. For both forages, it depends on the quality of the grass and when it was harvested. Stalky, later-cut forage is best for good doers because it increases chew time while minimising calories.

Too much protein can lead to excitability.

FALSE Protein is not a primary energy source for horses and any excess protein in the diet is excreted in the horse's urine. If your horse is prone to being excitable, avoid all mixes and look for fibre-based feeds containing less than 15% starch.

Some horses are allergic to sugar.

FALSE Glucose is the primary energy source utilised by the brain, which means it is impossible for horses to be allergic to sugar.

Feeds for laminitics must be molasses-free.

FALSE Feeds containing molasses are not automatically high in sugar. If your horse or pony is prone to laminitis, remember it is the total amount of sugar in the diet that is important and not the inclusion of individual ingredients such as molasses.

Fabulous fibre

Horses and ponies should receive at least 1.5% of their body weight in fibre per day.

Haylage contains higher moisture (water) content than hay and a greater amount needs to be fed to provide the same amount of fibre/dry matter.

Fibre is essential for gut health. Lack of fibre or poor-quality fibre can affect the horse's ability to utilise the remainder of its diet.



A BETA GUIDE...

to dispelling feeding myths and building nutritional knowledge

This poster helps you to separate fact from fiction when it comes to equine nutrition and provides some great tips and advice to help keep your horses and ponies healthy. There are also some fascinating facts on horses and their diets. All material has been supplied by leading UK nutritionists.



Fussy feeders

If you have tried a variety of feeds but your horse still needs tempting, try mixing a little extra molasses, apple juice or blackcurrant cordial into the feed.

You can also add grated or chopped

carrots or apples, dried spearmint or a handful of horse treats. Some horses like their feeds wet or soaked and those dampened or soaked in warm water might prove attractive, especially in winter.

SUPPLEMENT FACT

The law does not recognise a supplement as a category of feed – it is viewed in the same way as feed in a bag. All feed (including supplements) is divided into: complementary, to feed alongside forage; feed material, a single ingredient such as seaweed; mineral feed, not fully balanced with other nutrients; and dietetic.

FEEDING TIPS

- Horses are trickle feeders, so feed little and often throughout the day.
- Horses are designed to eat fibre over all other feed sources, so base your ration around the fibre component first.
- Sudden changes in dietary management have frequently been associated with an increased risk of colic. Owners remember to change hard feed gradually but forget that forage is the largest part of horses' diets. Changes should be introduced over four to 10 days.
- Horses should be fed by weight, not volume, so it is important to weigh your feed and conserved forage. As a rough guide, a Stubbs scoop typically holds 2kg of a cube, 1.5kg of a mix and 0.5kg of a chaff.

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.
- Calories are the same thing as energy – so "high-energy" feeds will also be high in calories.

WHAT DOES IT STAND FOR?



NOPS – naturally occurring prohibited substances. Look out for feeds bearing the BETA NOPS mark because it shows that the manufacturer belongs to this assurance scheme, which has taken stringent measures to minimise the risk of cross-contamination.

EGUS – equine gastric ulcer syndrome. Look out for feeds with the BETA feed assurance mark that flags up feeds suitable for horses and ponies prone to this painful condition.



WHAT IS...

MOLASSES?

Molasses is a by-product of the sugar production industry. It can come from either sugar beet or sugar cane. It is added to feed to aid palatability as a horse's natural diet contains sugar and the horse has evolved to recognise and generally prefer a sweet taste.

A BALANCER?

Balancers are small, nutrient-dense feeds formulated to provide a concentrated source of vitamins, minerals and quality protein to balance the diet alongside a negligible level of energy (calories).

