

BACK to BASICS

By John Kohnke BVSc RDA

Equestrian horse owners want their horses to be in good overall condition with adequate impulsion, but quiet mannered and with a 'cool' temperament.

Often feeding has to be modified to minimise 'fizzy' behaviour, which means avoiding grains as the primary energy source. There are a number of 'cool' feeds available that can provide energy without excess 'fizz'. A well formulated home-mixed ration allows individually tailored feeding while maintaining flexibility to work demand and temperament. Many home-mixed rations are cheaper to formulate than to feed the full amount of ready-mixed feed.

Q: What are the basic needs in terms of weight and bulk of feed?

A: The average equestrian horse in light to moderate work (up to 60 mins daily) based on walking, trotting and arena workouts, will maintain good condition on a blend of 30-40% hard feed with the remaining bulk as hay or pasture, with a total weight of 2.0-2.25% of bodyweight, or between 10-12kg of dry feed for an average 500-550kg equestrian horse. A horse will normally be able to consume 10-12 litres of feed bulk/100kg bodyweight daily, or between 55-65 litres of total feed each day for a 500-550kg horse. As an example, a biscuit of lucerne hay weighs between 1.8-2.0kg in a volume of around 15 litres, with 4 biscuits of lucerne hay (60 litres or 8kg) theoretically providing enough energy and plenty of protein for light work days.

Q: Which feeds are considered to be 'cool' feeds?

A: Fibrous feeds such as hay, bran and rice based pellets, as well as cooked (micronised or extruded) barley as a conditioner, are popular 'cool' feeds. Cracked lupins, copra meal and sunflower seeds do not contain starch, providing a protein, fibre and fat source of 'slow' release energy. Vegetable oils, such as canola oil (10% Omega 3, 20% Omega 6) and sunflower oil are cool energy sources that also promote coat condition. Pollard and bran mixes (the base of equestrian type pellets) are relatively 'cool' and help maintain condition. However, on rest or light work days, the amount of pellets or other cool feeds should be reduced or withdrawn, with the bulk made up of chaff, hay or if available, access to pasture grazing.

Q: How much and what type of chaff should be fed in the hard feed?

A: Generally, a feed containing pellets, lupins with cooked (extruded or micronised) barley or an extruded grain blend can be bulked up with an equal to twice the volume of a 50:50 'white' and 'green' chaff mix. Long chopped 'white' chaff between 2-4 cms in length promotes chewing and fosters better overall digestion of the 'hard' feed mix and slows down consumption.

Q: How do you maintain good coat condition?

A: Feeding a diet with an added oil blend of Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids, such as 15mL of cold pressed canola oil per 100kg bodyweight daily (500kg horse = 75mL) will help to improve coat condition on most dry feed based rations. Apple cider vinegar at a similar rate may help dapple the coat. A supplement containing zinc, copper, iron and Vitamin A will help promote coat condition on a diet low in those nutrients from stored hay.

Q: Is a mineral and vitamin supplement necessary?

A: An adequate intake of calcium for bones, especially if less than 3kg of lucerne chaff or hay is provided each day, as well as a range of trace-minerals such as zinc, copper and iron for coat condition, complemented by Vitamin A (often low in stored hay) and Vitamin D (often not produced in the skin when horses are rugged outdoors) are beneficial to maintain health, vitality, appetite, soundness and optimise coat condition. Many prepared, ready-mixed feeds contain extra minerals and vitamins, but binding effects between calcium and trace-minerals and oxidation of added oils during storage often reduce the beneficial effects of these nutrients in ready-mixed feeds.

A separate daily supplement of a wide range of nutrients that will help to make up shortfalls and correct natural losses in stored feeds is recommended.

For further specific advice, contact Kohnke's Own on 1800 112 227 or visit
www.kohnkesown.com

Ration Guideline

500-550kg Show Hack, Dressage Horse or Show Horse

(A larger dressage horse on regular training may need 25% more hard feed to meet demands.)

Feed	Feed Amount			Guidelines
	AM	Midday	PM	
Cooked Barley, Equestrian Pellets or Rice based Pellets	1.5kg	-	1.5kg	Provide 30% of total diet. Preferred cooked to improve digestion- steam-rolled, micronised or extruded. Cut back to one third on rest days.
Pollard (optional)	500g		750g	May help to put on condition initially, but then reduce to add taste only
Bran (optional)	300g		500g (dampened)	Palatable to horses- dampen at night. Improves feed texture- some vitamins.
Sunflower Seeds (optional)	120g (1 cup)		360g (3 cups)	Cool energy with 26% fat. Promotes coat condition- no need to add extra oil.
Copra Meal (optional)	500g		750g	Cool energy- no starch. Lower in protein than lupins. Palatable when dampened. Low in lysine for growing horses. Coconut oil for coat.
	Replace some barley and/or pellets on an equal weight basis.			
Lupins (optional)	500g		750g	Cool energy- no starch. Higher protein- max 1.5kg daily. 7% fat helps coat condition.
	Replace some barley and/or pellets on an equal weight basis.			
Vegetable Oil (optional)	125mL (½ cup)		125mL (½ cup)	Cool energy. Canola has good Omega 3 to Omega 6 blend. Palatable. Introduce over 10-14 days.
'White' Chaff (Cereal)	500g (4 litres)		800g (6½ litres)	Long chop 2-4cms long to encourage chewing and salivation. Sweetens and opens up to feed to slow consumption.
'Green' Chaff (Lucerne)	500g (4 litres)		800g (7 litres)	Ideally 50:50 mix with long chop white chaff. Adds calcium. Dampen if dusty.
Molasses (optional)			½-1 cup	Mix with equal amounts of warm water. Pour onto feed just prior to feeding.
Apple Cider Vinegar (optional)			¼ cup (60 mL)	Mix with 3 to 5 times volume of water. Encourages appetite. May dapple coat.
Hay Lucerne, Clover or Meadow hay	1 biscuit (1.8 – 2.0kg)	½ biscuit (1 kg)	1-1½ biscuits (2-3kg)	Lucerne has higher protein and calcium. Clover hay is usually sweeter- less protein. Meadow hay is balanced but varies in composition and value- more water.
Pasture Grazing (Preferable)	Day Time 2-4 hours in good weather.			Provides fluid and wide range of nutrients. Reduces boredom and encourages free exercise. Ensure fences are safe. Rug to protect coat.
Minerals, Vitamins and Salts	Cell-Provide™ (Light Work)		50g	Contains full range of minerals and vitamins to balance feeds for light work up to 60mins daily.
	Cell-Vital™ (Heavy Work)		40g	Provides extra trace-minerals and vitamins for heavy, regular work at 60-120 mins daily. May need 30g DCP if low lucerne diet, less than 3kg Lucerne, or a supplement of CELL-OSTEO.
	Cell-Salts™		60-90g	Rock salt is sufficient for light work. Provides salts to balance diet relative to work. Sweetened, black currant flavoured.