

30 Nutrition Tips

Keep your horse in shape with 30 top feeding tips.

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1. Most horses benefit from free-choice access to forage, preferably grass hay or non-irrigated pasture.
2. Rotate pastures. Overgrazed pastures are less nutritious and prone to parasite contamination from manure.
3. Lack of dental care, including regular floating, results in less efficient chewing of food.
4. Store hay off the ground to prevent mold, and protect it from the elements to maintain nutritional value.
5. If your pastures don't offer the nutrition your horses need, supplement them with additional rations after consulting your veterinarian.
6. Feed changes should be introduced slowly over several weeks.
7. Deworm on a regular basis—don't let parasites rob your horse of nutrients.
8. Vaccinate: Even the healthiest of horses that receive the best nutrition can't fend off all disease.
9. Feed by weight, not volume.
10. Invest in the best watering system you can. Clean, unfrozen water (and plenty of it) is vital to good digestive function.
11. Ask your veterinarian to perform a wellness exam on your horse every year. Your vet can suggest dietary recommendations based on your horse's current weight and exercise routine.
12. Keep horses prone to founder off grass high in sugars. Don't be fooled: Brown grass can be just as deadly as the lush green variety.
13. To prevent obesity, make sure your horse receives regular exercise including daily turnout. 24/7 turnout is optimal, but beware of excess nutrients from pasture.
14. Rather than increasing grain rations for weight gain or added energy, up your horse's forage ration and ask your veterinarian about the benefits of fat supplementation.
15. If your senior horse has trouble chewing, talk to your veterinarian about feeding soaked hay pellets and soaked beet pulp pellets along with a senior feed product.
16. If you keep horses together, keep an eye on those at the bottom of the pecking order to ensure they're getting their fair share of food.
17. When supplementing your horse's diet, follow product label directions.
18. Even if your horse is an easy keeper, he still needs his forage ration. If obesity is an issue, consider slowly switching out rich calorie-dense hay, such as alfalfa, for grass hay.
19. Just because a horse has a "hay belly" doesn't necessarily mean he's fat. Health problems can contribute to a pot-bellied appearance.
20. During cold weather, increase your horse's hay rations to help keep him warm and to fend off weight loss.
21. Regularly remove blankets to inspect and feel through the hair to see if your horse is staying in good flesh.
22. Pregnant and nursing mares, as well as foals and young horses, need special diets, so work with your veterinarian to make sure their nutritional needs are met.