

Storing Bagged Horse Feed

Don't let good feed go bad. Keep it from spoiling with expert tips for proper storage.

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Keeping your bagged equine feeds fresh helps ensure they are safe and nutritious for your horse. We asked Eric Haydt, vice president of sales and marketing at Triple Crown Nutrition Inc., and Harold C. McKenzie III, DVM, MS, Diplomate ACVIM, and an assistant professor of equine medicine at Virginia Tech's Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center, for their recommendations on product freshness.

"Keep bagged feeds out of weather," Haydt says. Feeds kept in direct sunlight, damp or wet conditions or high temperatures will spoil quickly. Instead, Haydt recommends storing feeds inside tack rooms, away from the elements. "Also, don't put bagged feeds on the ground. Store them on pallets instead," he says. The pallets protect products from moisture and ground-dwelling bugs and rodents.

It's not a bad idea to place a bagged feed in a pest-proof container, but use common sense. "Before adding new feed into a storage container, empty out all the old feed," Haydt advises. All products eventually spoil, and moldy old feed will taint your new stock.

Some tenacious rodents have been known to gnaw through plastic storage containers. If this happens, discard your feed and start over with a tougher container. "Rodents can shed bacteria, such as Salmonella, which causes diarrhea," McKenzie says. He explains that rodents can cause death in some cases. "I have seen cases of botulism in horses after they've ingested grain from a bin that contains a dead rodent. It's pretty rare, but it happens."

Obvious signs that a feed has spoiled include infestation by insects or rodents, as well as feed that looks or smells bad. Also, watch your horse: If he refuses to eat a product he's always gobbled down with gusto, assume the feed has spoiled and either throw it away or return it for a refund.

Most manufacturers don't print "sell by" dates on their product labels. Hayde says most textured feeds are best if used within 45 days of purchase – pelleted feeds are best if used within 60 days of purchase. Of course, you might not know how long a product was sitting on a feed store shelf before you bought it. However, many manufacturers include lot numbers and dates on their product labels. If you have any concerns, contact the manufacturer to find out how fresh the product really is.

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