

## Useful Hints & Tips

# How to feed your horse or pony...

Horses in the wild traditionally fed themselves on roughages. However since their domestication a diet of both roughages and concentrates is needed to keep them in prime condition and fit for their work. This means a mixture of grass, hay, oats and bran. Today there are a large number of horse feed manufacturers and a vast range of feeds available to all horse and pony owners. Thomas Bell Country Store have their own range of high quality and nutritionally sound feeds and experts in our store to advise you on your individual animal's needs but this guide outlines the main components needed to ensure a varied and balanced diet fit for purpose.

### What are my horse's nutritional requirements?

Roughages are needed to aid the digestion process and maintain a healthy gut function. In summer grass is the principal roughage and in winter hay (which must not be dusty or mouldy) a popular alternative to Hay is Haylage. Haylage is a product wetter than hay but fermented to prevent a bacterial or fungal presence.

Thomas Bell Country Store have a range of alternative fibre sources from Dengie, Spillers and Molichop.

Concentrates are man made feeds containing all the elements nutritionally required in a compact form predominantly cereal grains of oats, barley and maize with their main function being an energy source for the horse. Care must be taken to prevent over feeding of cereals as 'heating' may occur which results in behavioural problems usually over excitement. Cereals fed to ponies in particular should be carefully rationed to prevent control issues.

Protein feeds are needed for growth. Extracted soya bean meal, linseed and peas and beans are all sources rich in protein. Oils and vitamins can also be provided by hot or recently exercised horses as cold water given to excess can induce colic. This feed group which can aid a variety of function including amino acid production and maintaining coat condition.

Bran is both a source of protein and fibre and is a by product of the milling process.

However, care should be taken as bran contains phosphorous salts which combine with calcium in the stomach to prevent its absorption therefore hampering bone development particularly in growing animals.

Sugar beet pulp is both a source of fibre and protein with the sugars absorbed quickly in the small intestine and more fibrous content in the large intestine. Sugar beet pulp should always be thoroughly soaked before being fed to horses.

Molasses is a sweet tasting by product of the sugar industry and is a source of energy but more commonly a palatable substance used to aid ingestion of fussy eaters.

### Compound feeds are the commercially available feeds seen in our country store and fit into one of three categories:

- complete feeds providing a complete nutritional package for the horse
- concentrate feeds providing a complete nutritional package when fed with roughages
- balancer feeds providing extra protein to counteract any deficiencies when feeding cereals and roughages.

These categories of compound feeds are then further divided into the different classes of animals ranging from those doing little work, requiring a simple diet to those in competition and heavy work requiring a much higher plane of nutrition.

Thomas Bell Country Store provides a compound feed to suit all classes of horse.

From high fibre feeds to competition diets with all the well known brands such as Spillers, Dobson and Horell, Allen & page and many more. We also boost are own brand of concentrate feeds so we can provide something to suit every horse and budget.

### How much do I need to feed?

The amount a horse needs to eat depends on both its physical size and the work it conducts. A small pony may weigh 200kg whereas a shire horse may weigh up to 1000kg so differing nutritional requirement are going to be needed.

In order to determine the weight of your horse use this simple formula:

$$\text{Body weight (kg)} = \text{heart girth (9cm)} \times \text{length (cm)} / 11877$$

The amount of megajoules per day of digestible energy needed by an animal from any horse feed for maintenance can then be determined by using this formula:

$$\text{Digestible energy} = 5.9 + 0.13 \times \text{bodyweight (kg)}$$

This figure can then be flexed according to the amount of work being undertaken and the condition of the horse.

Special care should be taken in times of pregnancy, lactation, growth and breeding times as nutrition can have fundamental affects here.

### Supplements

As with human health an array of supplements ranging from general vitamins and minerals to products specific to aid joints and mobility are available for horses.

### Water

Access to clean, fresh water is essential to every horse's well being. As a general rule a horse will need 5 litres of water per 100kg bodyweight per day. This needs to be flexed according to conditions as on hot days this quantity could be tripled and in periods of lactation a mare needs more water in order to produce milk for her foal and care should be taken with hot or recently exercised horses as cold water given to excess can induce colic.

The information in this publication is meant as a brief and general guide only and is not intended to be specific advice, or a exhaustive treatment for the subject.

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## Healthy Pets are Happy Pets



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We understand how important your animal is...