

Why horse feed is and why vitamins and minerals matter

Horse feed is a prepared feed used alongside, or in some cases instead of, forage to cover a horse's daily nutrient requirements. The goal is not simply to add calories. A well-chosen horse feed promotes nutritional balance by supplying vitamins, minerals, protein, and digestible energy in proper amounts for the horse's bodyweight, workload, and condition score.

For most horses, forage should form the foundation of the diet because the digestive system is designed for a forage-first approach. Grass, hay, and haylage support gut health, provide fibre, and encourage steady digestion. However, forage alone does not always supply enough vitamins and minerals, especially when pasture quality is variable or when a horse has higher energy needs. That is where horse feed, balancers, concentrates, or a complete horse feed may be useful.

Vitamins and minerals are small parts of the ration, but they have a big impact. Vitamins such as vitamin A, vitamin D, and vitamin E support vision, bones, immune function, muscle function, and recovery. Minerals like calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, potassium, selenium, copper, and zinc help with bone strength, nerve function, hydration, metabolism, and hoof and coat condition. Trace minerals are particularly important because even small deficiencies can affect performance, fertility, and long-term health.

A common mistake is assuming that more horse feed automatically means better nutrition. In reality, the right feed is the feed that closes gaps without creating overfeeding, excess starch, or unnecessary calories. That is why practical feeding decisions should start with forage, then build a balanced ration around the horse's actual needs.

Types of horse feed and the benefits of each

You can find several kinds of horse feed, and each fulfills a different purpose. Choosing between them depends on whether your horse needs energy, more vitamins and minerals, more fibre, or all three.

Forage is the core of the diet. It comprises hay, haylage, and grass. Forage provides fibre, supports chewing time, and assists stabilise the digestive system. It is usually low in starch and sugar versus many hard feeds, which makes it suitable for a forage-first feeding plan.

Concentrates are more calorie-dense feeds, often made from grains, fiber mixes, oil, and added micronutrients. They are used when a horse needs extra fuel than forage alone can provide. Because concentrates can be more nutrient-dense, they must be fed with care to avoid digestive problems and excess energy intake.

Complete horse feed is formulated to be offered as the only hard feed alongside forage. It often combines energy, roughage, amino acids, vitamins, and minerals in one ration, which can simplify feeding. Some complete feeds are especially useful for horses that find it hard with large feed volumes or for owners who want practicality.

Bifid UK

+44 800 422 0888

sales@bifid.co.uk

<https://bifid.com/uk/>

Other common types of horse feed include balancers, cubilized feeds, pelleted feeds, chopped forage, and conditioning rations. A balancer is a small-volume nutrient-dense product that helps support vitamin and mineral consumption without adding much extra energy. That can be ideal for a good doer or a horse on plenty of

forage. Conditioning feeds are usually more energy-dense and may benefit horses with greater energy needs or those needing more body condition.

The best option often hinges less on labels and more on the function the feed plays in the ration. If the diet is low in forage quality, the feed should work to cover nutrient gaps. If the horse already has enough calories, the feed should mainly provide micronutrient intake rather than cause unnecessary weight gain.

How to pick horse feed for newcomers

When you are first exploring horse feed for beginners, the smartest starting point is not the feed label alone. Start by assessing the horse's body condition score, current workload, forage access, and digestive health. This information tell you whether the horse needs more energy, better nutrient coverage, or simply a more consistent feeding schedule.

A horse with a stable condition score and ample forage intake may do well on a balancer plus forage. A horse that is underweight, in regular work, or recovering from illness may need more concentrated energy and protein. A good doer, by contrast, may need a low-calorie option that still delivers vitamins and minerals without excess energy.

Horse feeding rules matter here. Select feed based on need, not habit. If the horse is holding weight well, adding large amounts of hard feed can be counterproductive. If digestive health is a concern, avoid sudden changes and introduce any new feed gradually. Horses benefit from consistency, and their digestive system tends to react badly to abrupt changes in daily intake.

Beginners should also look for straightforward labelling. Check the ingredient list, digestibility, and nutrient specification. The feed should state what vitamins and minerals it supplies and whether it is a fortified feed. If you are unsure, compare several products and decide whether you need a balancer, a complete horse feed, or simply better forage.

Horse feeding rules: 10 essential rules to follow

These 10 rules for feeding horses are practical habits that help preserve health, avoid shortages, and reduce overfeeding risk. They are especially helpful when formulating a balanced ration.

- **1. Build around forage.** Whenever possible, use a forage-first approach.
- **2. Tailor feed to workload.** Energy needs change with exercise, growth, pregnancy, and age.
- **3. Offer small meals.** Small meals are gentler on the digestive system than large, infrequent portions.
- **4. Maintain steady water intake.** Fresh water helps digestion, hydration, and nutrient utilisation.
- **5. Introduce changes gradually.** Sudden changes can upset gut health.
- **6. Steer clear of overfeeding.** Too many calories can result in weight gain and metabolic issues.
- **7. Balance minerals, not just calories.** Calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sodium, and potassium each matter.
- **8. Do not depend on one feed for everything.** Some horses need forage plus a balancer or supplement.
- **9. Check body condition score regularly.** This helps you notice changes before they become problems.
- **10. Stick to a consistent feeding schedule.** Consistent timing supports digestion and behaviour.

These horse feeding rules provide a useful framework whether the horse is a leisure pony, a good doer, or a performance horse. They also help owners make better decisions about supplements, concentrates, and fibre-based feeds.

Using a horse feeding chart to plan a daily ration

A horse feeding chart is a simple planning tool that helps turn forage intake, workload, and weight into a daily ration. It is not a substitute for professional guidance, but it gives owners a structured way to evaluate daily intake.

Start with the horse's bodyweight and condition score. Then estimate forage intake and check that with the horse's workload. A horse in light work may need only forage plus a balancer, while a horse in harder work may need extra concentrates or a complete horse feed. The chart should also account for age, appetite, and whether the horse has special nutritional requirements.

When using a horse feeding chart, look at the following points:

- How much forage the horse eats each day
- Whether the horse is maintaining, losing, or gaining weight
- The level of workload and energy use
- Any signs of poor coat, weak hooves, or low stamina
- Whether the current ration is supporting gut health and digestion

A chart is especially useful for spotting imbalances. For example, a horse may be getting enough calories but still have a deficiency in trace minerals. Another horse may be overfed in terms of energy but underfed in key micronutrients. A practical ration plan should solve both problems together.

How large an amount of horse feed should you provide?

No single answer exists to how much horse feed should you give, which is why many horse owners use a horse feed calculator uk tool as a reference. The correct ration size depends on body weight, forage quality, workload, and whether the horse needs energy, protein, or mainly micronutrient support.

A useful starting point is to consider the horse's daily energy requirements and compare them to what forage already provides. If forage meets most needs, the horse feed portion can stay small. If not, ration size may need to increase. This matters especially for a performance horse with higher energy demands, or for a horse that struggles to maintain weight.

Body weight matters because ration size should be proportional. A heavier horse usually needs more total feed than a lighter one, but not necessarily more concentrate if the forage quality is already good. Owners should also watch for overfeeding, especially in good doers, because excess calories can quickly lead to poor condition management.

Some people estimate using the horse feed calculator uk approach by entering bodyweight, activity level, and goal condition. That can help determine whether the diet needs more fibre, more energy, or a better balance of vitamins and minerals. The best ration is one that supports health without feeding more than necessary.

How far does horse feed cost?

Horse feed cost depends on the variety of feed, the bag size, the nutrient density, and how much of it the horse actually needs each day. A bag that seems expensive may end up being good value if the daily feeding cost is low because the feed is concentrated and only a small amount is required.

When asking how much does horse feed cost, take in the whole picture rather than the shelf price. A larger bag size may reduce the cost per kilo, but if the horse only needs a small amount, a smaller bag may still be the

better choice. Equally, a cheaper feed may require a larger daily amount, which can increase the real daily feeding cost.

To compare horse feed cost fairly, consider:

- Cost per bag size
- How long the bag lasts at the recommended rate
- Whether the feed replaces the need for a separate balancer or supplement
- The quality of the ingredient list and nutrient specification

Owners should also factor in forage, balancers, and any supplement costs. Sometimes a more expensive fortified feed is actually greater value if it reduces the number of separate products needed. The goal is to feed effectively while still meeting nutrient requirements.

Leading horse feed brands and comparison points

You'll find many horse feed manufacturers on the market, and the ideal choice is not always the one with the most eye-catching packaging. Compare feeds by reviewing the ingredient list and nutrient specification carefully. This information tell you what the feed is made from and what it provides.

Seek out detailed facts on fibre sources, cereal content, oil content, protein levels, and supplemented vitamins and minerals. A reputable feed may also explain whether it is designed for recreational horses, fitness, sport horse use, or reduced-energy diets. The most helpful products are transparent about digestive value and feeding rates.

Spillers horse feed stands as a familiar option frequently discussed by owners seeking a nutrient-rich ration. It can be useful to evaluate products from multiple horse feed companies in the same category rather than assuming all feeds meet the same purpose. A balancer should be matched with other balancers; a complete horse feed should be assessed with equivalent complete feeds.

The main questions are easy to ask: Does the feed suit the horse's level of work? Does it deliver the correct vitamins and minerals? Does it suit the horse's digestive health requirements? Does the daily amount make sense for the horse's bodyweight and condition score? Those answers matter more than brand familiarity alone.

Horse feed advice for balancing vitamins and minerals

Helpful horse feed guidance uk usually begins with the idea that vitamins and minerals should be set according to actual need, not assumed. A feed analysis can assist, but even in the absence of one, owners can still make practical decisions by looking at the diet as a whole.

Vitamin E is especially important for muscle function and antioxidant support, while selenium functions closely with it in numerous metabolic functions. Copper and zinc play a role for connective tissue, hoof quality, skin, and overall development. Calcium and phosphorus must also be kept in appropriate balance because they serve a major role in bone health. Magnesium supports nerve and muscle function, while sodium and potassium help maintain fluid balance and hydration.

A lot of horses get enough calories but still lack micronutrient coverage. This is where a balancer or fortified feed can help. In some cases, a vitamin supplement may be useful, but it should be chosen carefully so it does not duplicate what the feed already provides. Excessive supplementation can be just as unhelpful as a deficiency.

Below are some practical signs that the ration may need a review:

- A loss of topline or poor recovery
- A dull coat or weak hooves
- Sudden weight loss or gain
- Low appetite or changes in digestion
- Reduced performance in a horse that is otherwise fit

The best horse feed advice uk is often to make the ration simple, targeted, and based on the horse's real nutrient requirements.

Can you create a horse feed mix recipe at home?

A horse feed mix recipe can be made at home, but it should be approached carefully. Mixing bran, oats, and other ingredients without a clear plan can create an imbalanced ration. Home mixes may be useful for some horses, but they are rarely the easiest way to achieve full nutritional balance.

If you want to build your own horse feed mix recipe, a balancer is usually the safest starting point because it helps cover vitamins and minerals. Bran and oats can then be used in small amounts if the horse needs extra energy. Even so, the ration still needs to be checked for total protein, fibre, starch, and micronutrient coverage.

Oats are traditional and can be useful for horses needing quick energy, but they are not ideal for every horse. Bran is often included in home mixes, yet it should not be relied upon as a complete source of nutrients. Both ingredients should be used with caution and only as part of a wider balanced plan.

Home mixing may suit experienced owners who understand nutrient requirements and can calculate daily intake properly. For many beginners, though, a well-formulated balancer or complete horse feed is a safer and simpler choice. It reduces the risk of deficiency and makes feeding schedule management much easier.

Complete horse feed: when it helps and when it does not

Complete horse feed can be very helpful when ease, reliability, and a concentrated nutrient profile are priorities. It brings together many of the elements needed for a well-balanced ration, often reducing the need for extra feeds. For some horses, this is an efficient way to meet daily needs while keeping feeding simple.

It works best when the horse still receives plenty of roughage. Roughage remains essential for gut health and normal chewing behaviour. A complete horse feed should work alongside forage, not replace it entirely. If the horse already eats good forage, a complete feed can help fill in the gaps without large meal volumes.

Complete horse feed is often useful for a performance horse that needs reliable nutrient density. It may also suit horses that have difficulty with bulky rations, picky eaters, or owners who want a streamlined, all-in-one approach. On the other hand, it may not be ideal for a good doer that needs very little extra energy, because even complete feeds can provide additional energy than necessary.

The key question is whether the horse truly needs nutrient density or just a modest micronutrient top-up. If the latter, a balancer may be the more suitable option. If the horse needs extra energy and a more complete package, a complete horse feed may be the best fit.

FAQs about horse feed, nutrition, and supplements

What horse feed is best for vitamins and minerals?

The best horse feed for vitamins and minerals is usually one that fits the horse's workload and bodyweight without adding unnecessary calories. For many horses, that means a balancer or fortified feed alongside forage. If the horse needs more energy as well, a complete horse feed may be more suitable. The best choice depends on whether the diet needs a micronutrient top-up, extra calories, or both.

Do horses need supplements if they eat complete horse feed?

Not always. A complete horse feed is designed to provide a broad spread of nutrients, so some horses will not need additional supplements. However, the decision depends on the rest of the ration, especially forage quality and daily intake. If the horse already receives enough vitamins and minerals from feed and forage, extra supplements may be unnecessary. Always check the label before adding anything new.

How do I apply a horse feeding chart correctly?

Work with a horse feeding chart by first identifying bodyweight, roughage intake, workload, and body condition score. Then review that information with the horse's existing ration and adjust gradually if needed. A chart works well when it helps you create a balanced ration rather than just increasing feed amounts. It should support feeding timetable decisions, daily intake planning, and any changes in exercise or weight.

How much does horse feed cost per day?

The daily feeding cost depends on the feed type, how much the horse needs, and whether you also use a balancer or supplement. A more nutrient-dense feed may cost more per bag but less per day because smaller amounts are needed. To judge horse feed cost properly, compare the cost per serving, not only the bag price. That gives a better picture of actual daily feeding expense.

What are the main horse feeding rules to follow?

The main horse feeding rules are to put first forage-first, feed small meals, provide constant water intake, and match the ration to the horse's condition score and <http://business.theeveningleader.com/theeveningleader/markets/article/abnewswire-2026-7-24-with-half-of-britains-horses-overweight-bifid-launches-grain-free-low-sugar-feed-for-the-nations-good-doers/> workload. It is also important to avoid overfeeding, make any changes gradually, and monitor digestive health. These basic horse feeding rules help promote a balanced diet and reduce the risk of deficiency or digestive upset.

How does horse feed support a balanced vitamin and mineral intake?

Horse feed supports a balanced diet by supplying vitamins, trace minerals, and other nutrients that forage alone may not provide in sufficient amounts. A well-formulated feed can help cover trace minerals such as copper, zinc, and selenium, while also contributing vitamin A, vitamin D, and vitamin E. This is especially useful when the forage supply is inconsistent or when the horse has higher nutrient requirements.

What is the difference between a balancer and a complete feed?

A balancer is usually a small, nutrient-dense feed that supplies vitamins, minerals, and often protein without many calories. A complete horse feed is designed to provide a broader nutritional package and usually contributes more energy as well. In simple terms, a balancer is for nutrient coverage with low energy, while a complete feed offers more nutrient density and can support horses with higher energy needs.

Is spillers horse feed a strong example of a supplemented ration?

Spillers horse feed is often used as an example of a supplemented feed because many of its products are designed to include vitamins and minerals alongside energy and fibre. Whether it is appropriate depends on the specific product and the horse's needs. As with any fortified feed, check the nutrient specification, ingredient list, and feeding rate to make sure it suits the horse's ration and does not repeat other supplements.