

Choosing the right horse feed matters because every horse has different nutritional requirements, body condition, and workload. A cereal-free horse feed can be a practical option for horses that need low starch, high fibre, or a more forage based daily ration. It may also suit horses with laminitis, sensitive digestive health, or owners who want steadier energy release without the spikes that some cereal-based feeds can cause.

This guide explains what cereal-free horse feed is, who it suits, how to compare types of horse feed, and how to use a horse feeding chart or horse feed calculator uk style approach to match feed to your horse. It also covers horse feeding rules, horse feed cost, and simple horse feed mix recipe ideas for practical use. If you are looking for horse feed for beginners or clearer horse feeding advice uk, this article is designed to help you make sense of the options.

What's cereal-free horse feed?

Cereal-free horse feed is horse feed produced without common grains such as oats, barley, or maize. Rather than using starch from cereals, it usually uses fiber, oil, protein, and added vitamins and minerals to support a balanced diet. This makes it part of a broader group of low starch feeds that are often designed to support digestive health and a more even energy release.

Many cereal free products are still complete horse feed options, meaning they can provide enough nutrients for a horse when fed at the correct feeding rate with the right forage. Others are concentrate feed or balancer products that need to be paired with hay, haylage, or other forage. It is important to know the difference because "cereal-free" does not automatically mean "complete".

When comparing types of horse feed, look at the ingredient list and the analysis. A high fibre, forage based feed may be suitable for weight management, while a more energy-dense option with added oil and protein may be better for a performance horse. What matters is matching the feed to the horse's metabolism, workload, and condition score.

In practical terms, cereal-free horse feed often aims to support:

- stable energy release
- better digestive health and hindgut health
- weight gain or weight management depending on the formula
- lower starch intake for horses prone to laminitis
- controlled acceptance without unnecessary cereals

Who benefits from cereal-free horse feed?

A cereal-free diet can work for many horses, but it is especially useful when you want to reduce starch or build a more forage-led ration. It is often considered by owners working with horse feed for beginners because it can be simpler to manage than high-cereal diets, particularly when the horse needs steady energy and good gut health.

That said, cereal free does not mean one-size-fits-all. A leisure horse living mainly on forage may only need a balancer plus a small amount of concentrate feed, while a harder-working horse may need a more specific complete horse feed or extra supplements to meet its nutritional requirements.

When to consider cereal-free horse feed include:

- horses needing low starch diets

- horses prone to laminitis
- horses needing to manage weight without too much starch
- hard keepers needing managed weight gain with fibre and oil
- performance horses needing more even energy release
- horses with sensitive digestion or hindgut concerns

Good horse feeding advice uk always starts with the individual horse, not the label. Check body condition, workload, forage intake, and whether the horse has any medical issues. Horse feeding rules also matter here: changes must be gradual, fresh water must always be available, and the feed chosen should suit the horse's daily ration rather than simply looking appealing on the bag.

If you are new to horse feed for beginners, a vet or qualified nutritionist can help you decide whether a cereal-free horse feed is appropriate. For some horses, a balancer and forage may be enough. For others, a complete horse feed may be the simplest way to cover vitamins and minerals without overfeeding starch.

Types of horse feed that are cereal free

There are multiple types of horse feed that can be cereal free, and each has a different purpose. A few are designed to stand in for a full bucket feed, while others are there to top up forage and provide focused support.

Common cereal-free choices include:

- **Complete horse feed:** A full ration feed that can provide energy, fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- **Balancer:** A concentrated source of vitamins and minerals, often given with hay or haylage.
- **High fibre chaff or cubes:** Useful for increasing chew time and supporting digestive health.
- **Low starch mash:** Often used for taste appeal, hydration, and easier feeding.
- **Concentrate feed:** A broad category that may be cereal free and used for extra calories or nutrients.

Some horse feed companies specialise in low starch, high fibre feeding systems, while others offer a wide range of products for different work levels. Spillers horse feed is one example of a brand many owners recognise when comparing feeding options, and its product range illustrates how horse feed companies often group feeds by workload, condition, and digestive support rather than simply by whether they contain cereal.

When reading labels, note the balance of fibre, protein, and oil. A cereal-free feed can still be energy-rich if it uses digestible fibre and fats. It may also include supplements such as yeast, digestive aids, or added amino acids to support muscle maintenance and overall performance.

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For some horses, the best solution is not a single product but a combination of hay, haylage, balancer, and a cereal-free concentrate feed. That can be especially useful when you need to support body condition without increasing starch or upsetting the horse's metabolism.

How to choose a suitable horse feed for your horse

Selecting the right horse feed starts with a clear picture of forage intake, body condition, workload, and any health concerns. A horse feed calculator uk tool can be handy for estimating the likely daily ration, but it should

always be used alongside a horse feeding chart and professional guidance if your horse has special needs.

A straightforward way to assess the right feed is to ask:

- Is the horse maintaining, losing, or gaining weight?
- How much hay or haylage is already being eaten?
- Does the horse need more calories, more protein, or more vitamins and minerals?
- Is the horse a performance horse, a leisure horse, or a horse in rehab?
- Is the horse prone to laminitis, excitability, or poor digestive health?

A horse feeding chart can help you match feed type to condition score and workload. For example, a horse with a good body condition and low workload may only need forage plus a balancer. A thinner horse may need a higher calorie complete horse feed or extra fibre-based calories. A horse in harder work may require a feed with more digestibility and protein to support muscle and recovery.

When using any horse feed calculator uk style guide, remember that numbers are only a starting point. Individual metabolism, forage quality, and feeding rate all affect results. A feed that suits one horse may not suit another, even if they are similar in size.

Look for these qualities in a good cereal-free horse feed:

- easy-to-read labelling of starch and sugar levels
- appropriate protein for muscle support and tissue repair
- fibre for gut function and palatability
- added vitamins and minerals to meet nutritional requirements
- feeding directions that fit your horse's workload and body condition

Complete horse feed can be especially useful if you want an all-in-one solution. However, if your horse already gets a good amount of hay or haylage and only needs a small top-up, a balancer may be more efficient and cost-effective.

Horse feeding guidelines every owner should follow

Good horse feeding rules help support healthy digestion, maintain a healthy body condition, and minimise the risk of issues such as laminitis or poor hindgut health. Whether you use cereal-free horse feed or another type, the basics do not change.

These 10 horse feeding rules can be summarised as follows:

- 1. Make forage the foundation of forage such as hay or haylage.
- 2. Introduce changes slowly over several days or longer.
- 3. Measure by weight, not by eye.
- 4. Match the feed to condition score and workload.
- 5. Steer clear of rapid jumps in starch.
- 6. Provide clean water at all times.
- 7. Stick to feeding times as consistent as possible.
- 8. Check teeth, worming, and general health regularly.
- 9. Add supplements only if required.
- 10. Revisit the ration whenever work, season, or condition changes.

A feeding chart for horses is useful here because it offers a structure for balancing forage, concentrate feed, and any balancer or supplements. It can also help you avoid overfeeding a horse that is already getting enough energy from hay or haylage.

Remember that “more feed” is not always the answer. If a horse is poor in condition, the cause could be dental problems, worm burden, poor forage digestibility, or illness rather than a lack of bucket feed. Likewise, a horse that gains weight too easily may need better weight management rather than more calories.

For many horses, the best feeding plan is the simplest one that covers nutritional needs without excess starch.

How much does horse feed cost?

Horse feed cost depends on the type of product, the brand, the size of the bag, and how much you need to feed each day. So, how much does horse feed cost on average? There is no single answer, but cereal-free options can range from low-cost balancers to top-tier complete horse feed products that are priced higher because of their fibre, oil, protein, and vitamin content.

When comparing horse feed cost, look at the price per day rather than the price per bag. A more expensive bag may last longer if the feeding rate is lower. Likewise, a balancer may seem costly but can be cheaper in the long run if it replaces a larger amount of concentrate feed.

Things that influence horse feed cost include:

- brand and formulation from different horse feed companies
- whether the feed is complete horse feed or a topper
- amount needed for each daily ration
- whether supplements are already included
- specialised ingredients for digestive health or low starch feeding

Spillers horse feed and other established horse feed companies offer multiple options at different price points, which makes comparison easier. If budget matters, compare the daily feeding rate against what the feed provides. A cheap feed that lacks vitamins and minerals may lead to extra spending on supplements, while a more complete option may reduce the need for add-ons.

Also factor in forage. Good hay or haylage is a major part of the total feeding budget, and a forage based plan often delivers better value than relying heavily on bucket feed alone.

Basic low-starch horse feed mix ideas

A horse feed mix recipe can be as simple or as detailed as you need it to be. The aim is to create a ration that promotes digestive health, palatability, and nutritional adequacy without cereal. If you want a useful horse feed mix recipe, start with forage and add only what the horse genuinely needs.

Basic cereal-free horse feed mix ideas include:

- **Forage and balancer:** Hay or haylage with a balancer for essential vitamins and minerals.
- **High-fibre bucket mix:** Chopped forage, fibre cubes, and a little oil for energy.
- **Conditioning support mix:** A cereal-free complete horse feed with added protein for weight gain.
- **Performance support mix:** Forage, low starch concentrate feed, and targeted supplements.

If you are making a horse feed mix recipe at home, be careful not to create an poorly balanced ration. Mixing ingredients without understanding nutritional requirements can leave gaps in vitamins and minerals or overload the horse with certain nutrients. A complete horse feed or balancer can make home feeding more reliable because it reduces guesswork.

For some horses, a homemade mix can improve palatability and encourage eating. However, the mix should still support the horse's metabolism and avoid too much starch. The main focus should be fibre, sensible protein levels, and appropriate calories rather than volume alone.

Some owners also use supplements to fine-tune the diet, but supplements should not replace a proper feed base. If a horse needs help with muscle, coat condition, or digestion, use them to complement a balanced ration, not to patch up an unsuitable one.

Frequent errors when switching to cereal-free feeding

Switching to cereal-free horse feed is often beneficial, but mistakes are common, especially for horse feed for beginners. Good horse feeding advice uk always stresses that the transition should be managed carefully and in line with horse feeding rules.

Common issues include:

- switching feed too abruptly and upsetting digestive health
- believing cereal-free always means complete horse feed
- failing to check the condition score before making changes
- feeding by volume instead of weight
- relying on too many supplements when forage and balancer would be enough
- overlooking hay or haylage quality
- picking a feed with too little protein for the horse's workload
- using a low starch feed but still providing too many total calories

Another issue is misunderstanding laminitis support. A cereal-free ration may help reduce starch, but it does not necessarily solve every laminitis case. Overall diet, weight management, turnout, movement, and underlying health all matter.

It is also easy to pick a feed based on label claims rather than performance in the stable. Palatability matters because the best feed is one the horse will actually eat, but a tasty feed still has to meet nutritional requirements and support hindgut health. Always look at the full ration, not just the bucket feed.

FAQ: cereal-free horse feed

What is cereal-free horse feed?

Cereal-free horse feed is horse feed made without grains such as oats, barley, or maize. It usually relies on fibre, oil, protein, and added vitamins and minerals instead of cereal starch. Many products are designed to support digestive health, stable energy release, and a balanced diet.

Is cereal-free horse feed suitable for all horses?

Not always. Many horses benefit from it, especially those needing low starch or weight management support, but the best choice depends on body condition, workload, forage intake, and health status. Some horses may need a complete horse feed, while others only need a balancer plus forage. Horse feeding advice uk from a nutritionist or vet is helpful if you are unsure.

How do I choose the best horse feed for my horse?

Start with forage, condition score, workload, and any health issues such as laminitis or poor digestive health. Use a horse feeding chart as a guide and, if needed, a horse feed calculator uk approach to estimate the daily ration. Then compare types of horse feed for starch, fibre, protein, and vitamins and minerals to find the best match.

How much does horse feed cost on average?

Horse feed cost varies significantly depending on the product, brand, and feeding rate. The most useful comparison is cost per day rather than cost per bag. Some horse feed companies offer economical balancers, while others sell premium complete horse feed products with higher ingredient quality or tailored support.

Can I make a cereal-free horse feed mix at home?

Yes, but it needs thought. A simple horse feed mix recipe might include forage, fibre-based ingredients, and a balancer or complete horse feed to cover vitamins and minerals. Homemade mixes should still meet nutritional requirements and avoid unbalanced levels of starch, protein, or calories. If in doubt, keep the mix simple and get specialist horse feeding advice uk.