

Does my horse need salt?

Yes. Salt is best provided in a plain salt block especially if he is getting a commercial feed that contains minerals. Place the block out of the rain. If a mineral block is given, add a plain salt block also. A 5 lb. salt block should last an average horse 2 months.



What other care does my horse need?

Other factors to consider are foot trimming or shoeing every five to eight weeks by an experienced farrier. The feet should be picked out daily to prevent thrush.

A veterinarian will help you decide when is the best time to deworm (at least 2-4 times per year) and vaccinate your horse. The horse will need yearly vaccinations. At a minimum these should include rabies, eastern equine encephalitis, western equine encephalitis, tetanus and West Nile virus. Your veterinarian can help you determine if other vaccines are recommended.

Horse's teeth will develop sharp points. A veterinarian can determine if they should be "floated" or filed.

Additional Resources

VA Cooperative Extension Resources for Horses

http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/tags.resource.html/pubs_ext_vt_edu:horses

eXtension.org - Horse Resource Area

<https://articles.extension.org/horses>

The Horse Magazine - AAEP

<https://thehorse.com/111874/horse-feeding-basics/>



**BASIC FEEDING
GUIDELINES FOR
HORSES**

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Horses require forage as the basis of their diet. Forage can be in the form of grass if the pasture is well managed and large enough (2 acres/horse). Hay should be used to supplement or replace pasture especially in the winter months. You know your horse is getting enough to eat if you can feel his ribs but not see them.

How much hay should I feed?

One and one-half to 2 pounds of hay per 100 pounds of body weight is the average amount required per day for each horse. This amount may be less for some “easy keepers” and more for other horses. The average 1,000 pound horse would eat 15-20 pounds (1/3 of a square bale) per day. That means that each horse should be provided with 10 bales of hay per month. If round bales are used, make sure they are of good quality and designed to be fed for horses. Some hay grasses that are well tolerated by cattle can cause severe disease and even death in horses. When purchasing a round bale, ask the approximate weight. If a round bale weighs 500 pounds, it will last 5 horses 5 days if not wasted.

What does good quality hay look like?

Some hay (especially if it is meant for cattle) does not have enough nutrients to keep a horse healthy.

Good quality hay should have:

- Lots of leaves and few stems
- Small diameter stems
- Squeeze it. It should be soft and pliable, with no sharp sticks
- Few seed heads or blooms
- Fresh smell, green color
- Avoid dusty, musty smelling hay
- Clean with no dried leaves, weeds, garbage etc.

Every horse has different needs. Ask an expert to help you design a feeding program that is right for your horse.

How much water does a horse drink?

An adult horse will drink 10 to 20 gallons per day and more when it is hot or they are consuming dry forage. All horses need clean, good-quality water at all times. Outdoor water troughs should be cleaned at least every couple of weeks to remove debris and algae. Stall water buckets should be emptied and rinsed daily. Check automatic water systems daily, as they could malfunction and not be providing adequate amounts of water. Be sure to break ice on water during winter months or heat the water.



How much grain should I feed?

Grain may provide additional energy and calories for horses that are in work, are pregnant or lactating. When adding grain to a forage diet feed the same amount every day. It is best to divide it into 2 feedings. Oats are a simple grain and weighs one pound per quart. If a horse is worked on average 1 hour per day, then a rule of thumb is to feed 1 pound of oats divided into 2 feedings. There are many commercially manufactured horse feeds available in feed stores. Follow the manufacturer’s recommendations on the label. Be sure to store grains in a locked room to avoid accidental over ingestion which can lead to founder, colic or death.

How can I safely change the type or amount of grain fed?

When changing feeds SLOWLY increase the amount of grain or supplement (i.e. one-half pound per animal per day maximum increase). If starting a pelleted feed, add enough water to it to make it soft to prevent choke. Changes in hay do not present many problems.

Can I feed cattle feed to my horses?

No. Many cattle feeds contain Rumensin, lincocin or tetracyclines. These antibiotics can be fatal to a horse.