

Equine Feeding Recommendations

Good equine nutrition is more than just throwing your horse a flake of hay twice per day! It is also more than just giving your horse two flakes of alfalfa a day, because "...that is how they've always been fed."

There are many factors to consider when feeding horses, with hay being just one of them. Following are a couple of rules of thumb when it comes to feeding hay, which everyone seems to agree on for the most part, and are as follows:

A good starting point is to feed a minimum of 1.5 to 2 lbs. of hay, per 100 lbs. weight of the horse, or 1,000 lb. horse = 15-20 lbs. of hay. This would be for a horse that was in light or no work. However, for horses in training, doing heavy work, or for high performance and competition horses, hay can be increased up to 3 lbs. per 100 lbs. of weight to handle their particular needs.

A reasonably active horse, used a minimum of 2-3 times per week, on long trail rides or lots of arena work, would need about 2.5 lbs. of hay per 100lbs., or approximately 25 lbs. of hay per day for a 1,000 lb. horse.

I personally like to follow the "one-third rule" which I learned from my vet, Dr. Matt Matthews, years ago. That rule is to feed three different types of hay per day, one-third in weight of each type, not only for variety but to meet nutritional requirements as well.

For example, a horse fed 21 lbs. of hay per day would get: 7 lbs. of either forage or bermuda, 7 lbs. of



alfalfa and 7 lbs. of orchard grass, or orchard grass mix, which will assist in balancing the calcium phosphorus ratio. Those hays should be varied and changed on occasion, using timothy or oat hay or a mixed grass hay, which I prefer. The 21 lbs. would be divided into two or three daily feedings. They also need a good concentrated feed, once per day, with added natural supplements and a concentrated probiotic/microbial/digestive enzymes so that they are able to absorb and assimilate all they are getting.

I am also a big fan of using herbs for horses, and many of our **ZYME** blends contain wild crafted herbs that support various systems in the horse's body, and provide extra naturally occurring vitamins and nutrients. Some contain anti-inflammatory compounds. For a explanation of the herbs and their benefits, see our **[HERB GLOSSARY](#)** publication.

FEEDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Horses exercised occasionally/senior horses: feed approximately 15-20 lbs. of hay per day using the one-third each rule: bermuda, oat, forage, orchard grass, timothy or orchard grass mix, very little (1-2 lbs.) or no alfalfa.

One concentrated feed per day with natural supplements, and either **[PRO-ZYME](#)** or more importantly **[SENIOR-ZYME](#)** for older horses fed daily, year round.

Senior-Zyme was designed with the older horse in mind, and contains a base of Pro-Zyme with a blend of beneficial herbs to support the needs of the older horse, including anti-inflammatory compounds and digestive aids.

Horses exercised lightly/in good physical shape: feed approximately 20-22 lbs. of hay per day using the one-third each rule: bermuda, oat, forage, orchard grass, timothy or grass mix a small amount of Oregon or Northern Nevada alfalfa, or, for other parts of the country an alfalfa that is green and leafy.

One concentrated feed per day with natural supplements added. Prozyme should be added to their concentrated feed on a daily basis,

if not daily then it should be used for a minimum of one week after each worming or after any vaccines or any course of antibiotics.

Working horses (i.e. cutters, reiners, ranch horses): feed on average 24-28 lbs. of hay per day, using the one-third each rule: Oregon or Northern Nevada alfalfa, oat or three-way forage, and either orchard grass, grass mix, or timothy.

One concentrated feed per day with added supplements for working horses and one quart of "race-horse oats" soaked in one quart of water. It is particularly useful to give 20 grams daily of **[JOINT-ZYME](#)** and Missing Link (found at **www.designinghealth.com**). As an alternative they could be fed Farrier's Choice **[SUPER-JOINT-ZYME](#)**TM formula which contains higher amounts of Glucosamine, **[MSM](#)**, Biotin, and naturally occurring Biotin, to help keep them healthy and sound.

Breeding mares: A variety of hays should be free fed, especially if the mare is in foal. Mares who tend to gain weight easily should be fed hay by weight, using the one-third each rule, emphasizing the highest quality hay available. Feed at the rate of approximately 22-24 lbs. per day. This is especially important during the last three months of pregnancy. I usually supplement the hay with a good mare and foal concentrated sweet feed, one cup of rice bran, one cup of "racehorse oats," soaked in one cup water. I also Missing Link, **[KELP](#)**, and **[MARE N' FOAL-ZYME](#)**. I have found this to be a good combination for robust and healthy foals and mares who stay healthy and sound.

Open mares: For mares who are not in foal I recommend a variety of hay using the one-third each rule or pasture grazing, feeding hay per the horse's weight. I also recommend a 20-gram scoop of **MARE-ZYME** per day during Spring and Summer. However, once a mare is found to be in foal then I usually switch them to Mare N' Foal-Zyme for the duration of the pregnancy. Mare N' Foal-Zyme is fed at the rate one 20-gram scoop per day, and contains a blend of herbs that have naturally occurring nutrients as well as vitamins.

Foals and weanlings: Foals and weanlings should be free-fed hay along with their mothers for optimal growth. They should also be fed a concentrated feed especially designed for them, along with a small amount of rice bran, Missing Link, Kelp and **FOAL-ZYME**.

Foal-Zyme was designed to assist the growing foal to assimilate all of the nutrition from its feed and help prevent epiphysitis, which is a terrible tragedy that befalls many breeders. Foal-Zyme helps the foal absorb and utilize the calcium and phosphorus from their diet. This keeps the balance in check and can help prevent scours. For Foal-Zyme we use a base of Pro-Zyme where we added specially selected wild crafted herbs that are known to be beneficial to the growing foal, and to boost its immune system.

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

I personally recommend and feed my own horses the following:

Mornings: One flake of either oat, three-way forage or bermuda, rotated daily.

Midday: One small flake of Oregon or Northern Nevada alfalfa (or a good local alfalfa from your particular area of the country), or timothy.

Evenings: One large flake of a mixed hay or a small flake of Northern Nevada Alfalfa and a small flake of Orchard grass or grass mix and timothy. The mixed hay I prefer and purchase is grown in Northern California by one specific rancher. This type of hay is also grown in Colorado, Nevada, and Idaho. Grown specifically for horses, the hay is of premium quality, is "put up" right, using no pesticides/herbicides/insecticides, and barn stored until delivered. If you look you can probably find something comparable in your area of the country.

Daily: I also feed the Earth Song Ranch "goulash" - a mixture of concentrated feed and supplements. You'll need to find a good concentrated feed for your horse's needs and working requirements. I prefer the Purina Omelene feeds as over the years, I have found that Purina is on the cutting edge of the latest findings in good horse nutrition. To the goulash, I add one cup of my concentrated feed (Omelene 100 for my mare and Omelene 200 for my 2-year-old), one cup whole oats (sometimes called racehorse oats, soaked in one cup of water for a couple of hours) and one-half cup of rice bran. Then I add the supplements: one-third cup Missing Link, 20 grams (one scoop) of Prozyme, and one scoop of kelp (as it is rich in micro-nutrients which is particularly important for mares, as it supports thyroid function).

During the Spring I replace the Pro-Zyme with Mare-Zyme as it has all of the herbs that help balance and calm cycling mares. The Mare-Zyme blend has been shown to make mares less moody and spooky, and a little more mellow. It also supports their hormonal and endocrine systems naturally with wild crafted herbs that they would most likely seek out in the wild.

Occasionally: Several times per month I feed my horses a combination of other supportive herbs, some in their natural leaf form, some in powder form, which I personally blend for them. During my mare, Echo's pregnancy, I fed her RED RASPBERRY leaves, red clover flowers, CHAMOMILE flowers along with DANDELION leaf, increasing the amounts as she got closer to foaling. Her filly, Destinee, was healthy and robust and was up and running

around at about 15 minutes of age!

Due to the varying soil conditions in which our hays are grown, much of what we buy can be sandy or dusty. It is therefore recommended that you feed your horse one cup of psyllium (can be found at your local health food store), in rice bran (mixed with water, not dry), once a day, for three to five days each month. Add this to your normal evening feed ration (see page 3). Veterinary research has shown that feeding psyllium helps prevent both sand colic and the formation of enteroliths. I consider the use of psyllium to be very cheap insurance. One pound of psyllium should be enough for two horses for one month.

Remember, always follow the nutritional advice of your veterinarian regarding your horse's existing health problems. ♦

DISCLAIMER

The information provided within this web site is for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from a veterinarian or other health care professional, and should not be used for diagnosis or treatment of any health problem or for prescription of any medication or other treatment. A health care professional should be consulted before starting any diet or supplementation program, before administering any medication, or if your horse has a health problem. Do not discontinue any other medical treatments without first consulting your health care professional.

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