



Feeding for Condition

The Ideal Condition

Every horse is an individual with no two horses being exactly alike in size, shape and type with their breeding, history and management all influencing body condition. The ideal condition is measured by considering the horses body condition together with the amount of work or how "fit" a horse is. So for example a competitive endurance horse is usually leaner than a show-fit horse.

Why do horses lose weight?

Weight loss can be attributed to a number of factors, some of which are feed related. Poor worming regimes, a stressful environment and poor dentition where a horse is unable to digest his food properly all play a part. It is vital that your horse is able to utilise his feed correctly in order to encourage better digestion within the hindgut.

Using a weigh tape to monitor your horses weight weekly is a good idea to allow you to identify any changes in condition early on so that any action can be taken quickly. Once you are confident that your horse is in good health you can then start to look at your horses feeding regime.

Feeding for Weight Gain

When feeding a horse for weight gain it is important to allow the horse access to ad-lib forage as horses should eat up to 2.5% of their bodyweight daily in order to keep their digestive system healthy. This means your horse should have unlimited access to fibre such as good quality hay, haylage or grass. If a horse has trouble chewing the long-stem fibres then it is advisable to supply a forage replacer such as ReadyFibre Mash, which is ideal for horses that chew and digest less efficiently.

For underweight horses it is also beneficial to include some concentrates in the diet that will help supply the horse with more nutrients. A conditioning mix such as Show 'n' Glow is ideal due to its high oil content that will help improve overall condition and energy that will improve the top line. It also contains Yeasacc to aid with digestion and high levels of Vitamin



E. ReadyMash Extra is also a useful conditioning feed with high oils and the added benefit of glucose to help a horse reach the required condition and aid in recovery.

Feeding for Workload

When trying to improve a horse's condition it is vital that you take a horse's workload into account. If a horse's energy loss is greater than energy intake then weight, and subsequently, body condition will be lost. On the other hand, if a horse is receiving more energy than they are burning off daily then this will result in weight gain.

Most horses, especially those in light to moderate work will do well on a high fibre feed such as Forage 'n' Fibre which is a low energy feed that will supply them with all the essential vitamins and minerals that are needed. A horse in hard or intense work on the other hand will need a combination of energy sources including fibre, oils, protein and cereals, as found in Hunter Competition Mix, to meet the demands of work.

What about Supplements?

There are a wide array of supplements on the market today and it is vital to ensure your horse is receiving a balanced diet of amino acids, vitamins and minerals. If your horse's diet is unbalanced it is likely that this will prevent your horse gaining weight no matter how much you are feeding. If you are feeding your horse the recommended amount of a well formulated coarse mix it is likely that your horse will be receiving a well balanced diet.

If a horse is underweight it may be necessary to supplement its feed with a high oil supplement such as Sumo Original to help build up condition. This contains approximately twice as much energy as alternative feed sources so is a useful way to reduce the concentrate part of your horse's ration, whilst still providing your horse with all the nutrients needed to maintain condition.