



## Winter Feeding The Older Horse

Older horses noticeably deteriorate at a quicker rate during the winter months. As a responsible owner we can only manage and alleviate some of the conditions, which bring on the ageing process.

Once your horse is fully wormed and vaccinated it is wise to have a visit from your Equine dentist, your vet to give your old friend a general health check, and a farrier to check the condition of the hooves. Obviously there is a number of contributing environmental factors, of which we cannot control, such as the weather, but it is important to alleviate the problems, which may arise due to these factors. For instance making sure your horse has adequate shelter from the wind and rain and having clean dry rugs ready if appropriate.

Limited and low quality grazing is also a problem during these months therefore horses have to rely on alternative fibre sources such as hay and haylage.

The horses diet plays a major role in keeping the horse warm, healthy and in good condition during the later years in life. Like humans, as horses grow older not only the desire, but the ability to eat and digest food is compromised, therefore it is important to offer your horse regular small feeds rather than one large feed as this tends to be overwhelming.

As there are many 'Senior mixes' currently on the market, it is not only hard to decide at what age to feed these mixes but also what to look for in the mix.

It is the general consensus that horses seem to show signs of ageing from about 15 but, like humans horses age at varying speeds with many competing well into their twenties. This doesn't mean that now your horse has reached this age you have to automatically change his diet, just keep an eye on him and when you feel that he may need that little bit extra, for example his coat may not be as healthy looking, or he has dropped a little weight, slowly introduce a feed designed for the older horse.

It is vital that the feed is made up of quality nutrients as well as energy dense (high in calories) providing your horse with essential vitamins and minerals. When looking at the feed ingredients make sure that the cereals are cooked making them more readily digested within the foregut.



Rowen Barbary's senior range consists of two mixes, Senior Active and Senior Support, both being highly palatable with natural herbs, spearmint and garlic. They contain the same levels of vitamins and minerals incorporated in a protected bioplex form to aid maximum micro-nutrient utilization essential for the more mature horse. Both mixes have added oils and Sumo Original containing essential fatty acids, omega 3 and 6 and added Glucosamine for greater joint elasticity, shock resistance and lubricating powers. Yeasacc has been incorporated to improve hindgut fibre digestion and mineral utilization.

One major factor when horses age is the reduced ability to chew long stem fibre efficiently. Fibre is essential to any horses diet, as without it the digestive system cannot function. Fibre also provides slow release energy helping to maintain the horses regular body temperature. It is not only the quality and type of fibre, which is important, but also the structure and texture.

The Soft 'n' Soak range is designed to be fed soaked with warm or cold water for only 5 minutes forming an extremely palatable light-fluffy mash. Therefore benefiting the older horse, as they are able to consume large amounts of highly digestible fibre. ReadyFibre Mash is an extremely versatile, natural, healthy mash made up of 100% high digestible fibre, for horses requiring a high fibre, low starch and sugar diet. The main source of fibre in ReadyFibre Mash is derived from Soya hulls, an excellent form of fibre being very highly digestible making it a suitable forage replacer for horses that can no longer chew long stem fibre efficiently.

ReadyMash and ReadyMash Extra in the Soft 'n' Soak range are based on ReadyFibre Mash but also contain essential ingredients ensuring a natural, healthy, fully balanced mash. ReadyMash is produced using an excellent, highly digestible fibre source, together with added oils, vitamins and minerals making it an ideal feed. ReadyMash Extra incorporates essential ingredients for horses, helping to achieve the required body condition. All mashes within the range are extremely palatable and can be fed warm encouraging shy feeders.

Adding oil to the diet also provides the horse with a higher calorific meal without increasing the volume of feed, benefiting older horses and those with a poor appetite. Current research has proved that oil can be an extremely beneficial source of slow release energy, providing 2 times the amount of energy as carbohydrates from the more traditional cereals.



When feeding a significant amount of oil to the horse it is important to support the diet with the correct nutrients, specifically antioxidants Vitamin E, Vitamin C along with Selenium and Zinc. Current research has proved that oil can be an extremely beneficial source of slow release energy, providing 2 times the amount of energy as carbohydrates from the more traditional cereals. Sumo Original contains super high levels of oils and fatty acids ensuring excellent skin, coat, hoof and overall condition, alongside the necessary nutrients allowing your horse to utilise the oil correctly. Below are some facts and uses for Sumo Original.

**For weight gain** -Sumo Original can be fed as an alternative source of energy to maintain and achieve the required body condition.

**As a cereal replacement** -Being virtually free from starch and sugars, can be safely fed to laminitic horses and ponies.

**A complete energy source** -For horses that get excitable when fed high concentrate feeds.

**An alternative energy source** -The high oil content makes it a suitable alternative energy source for horses requiring a cereal free diet.

**Suitable for Veterans** -Excellent for improving or maintaining condition with older horses that can no longer chew pellets or long stem fibre.