

Forage Recommendations for Prevalent Equine Diseases and Disorders

The following chart provides guidelines for the selection of forage type(s) and format(s) based upon a horse's body condition or select equine diseases and disorders.



	Alfalfa Cubes	Alfalfa Pellets	Alfalfa Chopped	Alfalfa Compressed Bales	Orchard Grass Pellets	Orchard Grass Compressed Bales	Timothy Grass Pellets	Timothy Grass Compressed Bales	Teff Grass Pellets	Alfalfa/Oat Grass Cubes	Alfalfa/Timothy Grass Cubes	Alfalfa/Timothy Grass Pellets	Alfalfa/Timothy Grass Chopped	Alfalfa/Orchard Grass Compressed Bales
Gastric Ulcers - Horses with gastric ulcers can have decreased performance due to weight loss and inability to eat. Gastric ulcers are primarily caused by acid splash in the stomach during exercise. Research has shown that saliva from the chewing of forage is the main buffer of stomach acid. In addition, both calcium and protein buffer stomach acid. A diet of high quality, calcium and protein forage fed prior to exercise has a positive influence on acid buffering.	X	X	X	X										
Colic - Many potential reasons exist for horses to develop colic symptoms. Since the horse's digestive system is anatomically designed to digest fiber, lack of adequate quality fiber can cause digestive upset or colic. Hay that is harvested too early, without adequate fiber, or too late, with large amounts of non-digestible fiber can be a problem. Standlee Premium Western Forage is grown in a climate where forage can be harvested at the proper maturity, minimizing fiber issues.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Laminitis - A number of different diseases can result in laminitis symptoms in horses. While there is not a recognized scientific cure for laminitis, horses with laminitis often benefit from forage that is low in sugar and starch and also low to moderate in calorie content. Horses with laminitis should be managed at optimum or slightly below optimum weight or body condition to minimize load on damaged hoof tissue.									X	X	X	X		
Poor Dentition - As a normal function of aging, horses often have poor or missing teeth. This directly impacts their ability to properly chew and swallow feed. Horses with poor dentition benefit from pelleted or cubed forage with reduced fiber length. Pelleted and cubed forages should be soaked in water for 30 – 60 minutes prior to feeding to dissolve and soften the forage to allow easy swallowing of fiber.	X	X			X		X		X	X	X	X		
Carbohydrate Sensitivity - Several different disease conditions can cause horses to become sensitive to the sugar content of the diet. Potential diseases include: Insulin Resistance (IR), Cushing's disease and Metabolic Syndrome. These horses respond to diets that contain a low sugar and starch content. Grain and pasture can contain significant amounts of sugar and starch. Cool season forages such as Timothy and Orchard Grass can also contain higher sugar content.	X	X	X	X					X					
Overweight - Horses that are overweight are prone to a number of potentially devastating disease conditions. These horses respond to a diet that is lower in calorie content. These diets work best if aided with an increase in calorie expenditure through a forced exercise program.					X		X	X	X					
Underweight - Horses that are underweight begin to breakdown their own body tissue to satisfy energy requirements. These horses require higher calorie, higher protein forages to rebuild tissue.	X	X		X						X	X			
Tying-Up - Chronic forms of tying-up, including Polysaccharide Storage Myopathy (PSSM) and Recurrent Exertional Rhabdomyolysis (RER), may be partially managed with diet manipulation. Horses with either form of tying-up become less symptomatic with a diet low in sugar and starch. For these horses, a diet high in fiber and fat and low in grain (sugar and starch) is therapeutic. Progress can also be made with these horses in selecting forage that is low in sugar and starch.	X	X	X	X					X					