

Ask the Experts

Q: How do I go about changing my horse's feed, such as from sweet feed to pellets or vice versa?

A: It is always best to make gradual changes when you alter your horse's diet. Take 7-10 days to mix the different feeds together, thereby allowing the horse a gradual introduction to the new feed. Slowly change the horse over from the old feed to the new, and don't change more than a pound a day. This will help avoid digestive upset and possible colic.

Q: What is lysine, and why is it added to the feed of young, growing horses?

A: Lysine is one of the building blocks of protein. It is necessary for young, growing horses because their bodies utilize it to develop into their full-growth potential. Lysine is described as the "first limiting amino acid for growth," but put another way, it is the nutrient that is in shortest supply when horses are in their growing years.

Q: Why are fat levels being raised in horse feeds?

A: Increasing the fat content is one way to lower the starch content of feed, and this means calmer horses and less incidence of colic. Added fat also improves body condition. Performance horses benefit because they receive a higher intake of calories, and the calories are in a form they can utilize well.

Q: Why are steam flaked grains good for horses?

A: Steam flaked grains are more digestible than grains that aren't steamed or flaked. This means more of the nutrients are absorbed in the small intestine before they reach the cecum.

Q: What advantage does beet pulp provide to horses?

A: Beet pulp is a very digestible fiber, which means it is a good calorie source.

Q: Is mixing oats with my regular feed O.K. for my horse?

A: No. Mixing oats with feed dilutes the concentration of minerals and vitamins that are balanced in complete feeds.