

Foal Nutrition Tips from AAEP

A healthy foal will grow rapidly, gaining in height, weight and strength almost before your eyes. From birth to age 2, a young horse can achieve 90 percent or more of its full adult size, sometimes putting on as many as 3 pounds per day. Feeding young horses is a balancing act, as the nutritional start a foal gets can have a profound affect on its health and soundness for the rest of its life.

At eight to 10 weeks of age, mare's milk alone may not adequately meet the foal's nutritional needs, depending on the desired growth rate and owner wants for a foal. As the foal's dietary requirements shift from milk to feed and forage, your role in providing the proper nutrition gains in importance. Following are guidelines from the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) to help you meet the young horse's nutritional needs:

1. Provide high quality roughage (hay and pasture) free-choice.
2. Supplement with a high-quality, properly balanced grain concentrate at weaning, or earlier if more rapid rates of gain are desired.
3. Start by feeding 1 percent of a foal's body weight per day (i.e., 1 pound of feed for each 100 pounds of body weight), or 1 pound of feed per month of age.
4. Weigh and adjust the feed ration based on growth and fitness. A weight tape can help you approximate a foal's size.
5. Foals have small stomachs, so divide the daily ration into two to three feedings. Remove any old feed daily.
6. Make sure feeds contain the proper balance of vitamins, minerals, energy and protein.
7. Use a creep feeder or feed the foal separate from the mare so it can eat its own ration. Try to avoid group creep feeding situations.
8. Do not overfeed. Overweight foals are more prone to developmental orthopedic disease (DOD).
9. Provide unlimited fresh, clean water.

10. Provide opportunity for abundant exercise.

Seminole Mare and Foal Pellet and Seminole Mare and Foal Formula are both excellent choices for foals at this stage of their lives. For more information about your foal's nutritional needs, call 1-800-683-1881 and ask to speak to an equine nutritionist.