



Progressive Nutrition's Approach to Feeding Horses

Progressive Nutrition's Equine Guide # 102

Good nutrition is critically important for your horses' health and well-being. Ensuring that they receive a nutritionally balanced diet helps them achieve optimal growth and improved performance, and it saves you money over time. To accomplish this dietary balance for your horse, owners need to consider: 1) the type, 2) maturity (RFV) of your forages and 3) your horses: size, age, reproductive status and/or performance level.

Benefits and Characteristics of Forages:

Horses are continuous grazing animals, consuming several small meals over an 18-hour period every day. The foundation of a horse's balanced diet is forage (hay &/or pasture). Therefore, offering plenty of forage, whether "fresh" in a pasture or "dried" in a paddock or stall, will help maintain your animal's digestive-tract function and overall health. The more forage a horse chews, the more saliva they produce. Saliva is a natural buffer, containing needed digestive enzymes and is a lubricant for the horse's digestive tract. These enzymes and natural lubricant together, will: 1) improve digestion and absorption, 2) help offset certain types of colic and 3) reduce digestive upsets.

However, as important as forage is to your horse it will not, by itself, supply a balanced diet, of minerals and vitamins. The quality of the forage you feed has a great bearing on the amount of nutrients your horse is able to digest from it. For example, overly mature forages (stemmy) are difficult for horses to break down and digest. Therefore, you should select forages harvested in their *pre-bud* or *early-bloom* (softer) stages, because this maturity level is easier for horses to digest and it will deliver maximum available nutrients. Plants pull minerals from the soil they are grown on during their growing stages, but they increase the percentage of indigestible fiber as they mature. This decreases the nutrient availability in all forages, especially in protein (amino acids), major (Calcium & Phosphorus) and trace minerals (Copper & Zinc).

Horse Status Considerations (growing, reproducing or performing):

Depending on the status of your horse, the following considerations need to be taken into account:

- Horses come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from miniatures to drafts. They all require certain levels of amino acids, minerals and vitamins, based on their size, and their daily calorie needs will vary greatly.
- Foals grow at different rates. Therefore, the nutrition supplied to each foal should match the foal's growth rate and the changing enzyme's in their digestive system. This will help prevent digestive upsets (diarrhea/colic) as well as growth and developmental problems.
- Nutrition is vital during the ENTIRE length of gestation for both the broodmare and her unborn foal. Research has shown that early-gestation nutrition is just as important as late-gestation for the mare. Proper broodmare nutrition, throughout gestation, will help prevent depletion of the mares' body reserves, as the foal grows in-utero.
- Nutrition also affects performance at all training levels. The selected calorie source plays a vital role in your horses' stamina and attitude. Proper vitamin and mineral levels support muscle function and long-term soundness, which will allow your horses to perform their best, well into the future.

The Role of Progressive Nutrition's Feeding Program:

Progressive Nutrition's different lines of feed are formulated to fill the gaps between the nutrients supplied by your forage and what your horse needs. We remove the "guesswork" out of feeding your horse.

- First, we consider your horse's age, size, reproduction and/or performance needs,
- Second, we design our feeds to complement the type (grass or legume) and quality (Relative Feed Value) of forage you are feeding. We take into account the nutrient content and overall digestibility of your forage--to determine what additional nutrients really need to be added,
- Then, we select an appropriate Progressive Nutrition feeding program for your horse, balancing amino acids, fatty acids, major & trace minerals and vitamin needs, while supplying the calories to maintain desired: 1) body condition, 2) muscle development and 3) performance level.

Progressive Nutrition's goal is to furnish the highest quality balanced diet for your horse, giving you the results you demand. Check out Progressive Nutrition today. You won't be disappointed!