

# The Basics of Horse Feeding



## Question to ask yourself about feeding your horse:

Weight of horse _	Scales, weight tape, or Texas A & M method (see p. 2)
Age of Horse	ex: foal, weanling, yearling, 2-year old, mature, senior
Breed of Horse	ex: Quarter horse, Thoroughbred, Morgan, pony, etc
Body Condition	ex: overweight, skinny, good, etc
Activity Level	ex: pleasure, heavy work, racing, breeding, pregnant, etc.
Type of forage	ex: turned out on grass, alfalfa hay, grass hay, mixed hay
Feed preference	ex: Pellets, textured (sweet), whole grain (oats, corn), etc.
Feedings per day _	ex: once, twice, three times, whenever I feel like it.

### Points to ponder:

- 1 Build your feeding program around good quality roughage. (Hay or grass)
  A horse should consume 1 to 1.75 % of their body weight each day in roughage.
  ex: 1000 lb horse should eat 10 to 17 lbs of dry hay or equivalent grass per day.
  (1000 lb x 1.5% = 15 lbs of hay)
- 2 Feed by weight **NOT** by volume. This includes both grain and roughage.

Sweet feed, pellets, and grain all weigh differently.

ex: A 3 quart plastic scoop will hold approximately 4 lbs of pellets; 3.25 lbs of sweet feed and 3 lbs of oats.

Grass hay will usually weigh less and be more fluffy than alfalfa hay.

ex: Weigh the amount of hay do not feed by flakes. (Bales will vary from 40-75 lbs)

**3** Feed a minimum of 2 feedings per day.

Horses are grazers by nature. In a field they eat small meals all day long. Their stomach is about the size of a gallon jug. A horse will digest the food better and be healthier on 3 small meals versus 1 large one.

4 Different feeds have different amounts of nutrients and require different amounts to be fed.

ex: Oats	11% Protein	1180 Calories / lb.
Corn	9% Protein	1540 Calories / lb.
Basic sweet feed	12% Protein	1300 Calories / lb.
Premium sweet feed	14% Protein	1500 Calories / lb.

<sup>\*\*</sup> These are average values, check with your feed supplier for details on your feed.

Indiana requires that all horse feeds have a tag listing ingredients, protein, fat, fiber etc. This tag should also include a recommend feeding rate for the age and type of horse you are feeding. It will be listed something like this:

Class of Horse	LB feed per 100 LB bodyweight
Maintenance Horse	.25 to .5
Performance Horse	.5 to 1
Growing Horse	.75 to 1.5

ex: 1000 lb horse x 1% = 10 lbs of grain per day.

The cheapest feed is not always the best value:

ex: A basic feed costs \$5.50 per bag and recommends that you feed 8 lbs per day Feed Cost per day 5.50 / 50 lbs x 8 = .88 per day A premium feed costs \$7.50 per bag and recommends you feed 5 lbs per day Feed Cost per day 7.50 / 50 lbs x 5 = .75 per day

#### **5** Every horse is different.

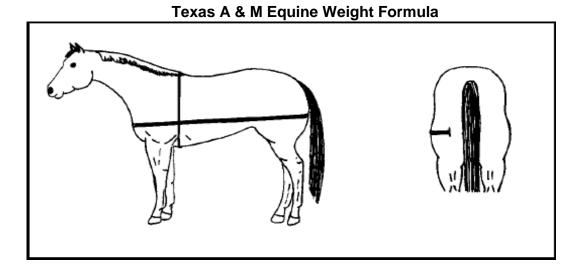
Some horses are "easy keepers" and will require very little feed to maintain their weight others (ex: thoroughbreds) are harder to keep weight on and must be fed more. Growing horses will require more feed than mature horses and older horses may require easier to digest and more nutrient dense feed. The guidelines on the feed tags are good starting points and you will have to adjust according to how each horse is doing. If possible ask the prior owner how they were feeding the horse.

#### **6** Exercise

The amount of exercise your horse gets is one of the biggest variables in how much grain you give him or her. The harder you ride, the more you feed.

ex: A horse working hard (riding 5 or 6 times per week) will require approximately twice as much grain as one with light work (1 to 2 times week).

\*\* These are all general recommendations, always read and follow label directions. If you have questions contact your feed supplier.



Girth x Girth x Length 330 \*

<sup>\*</sup> Use 330 for a mature horse, 280 for weanlings and 301 for yearlings.