

EQUINE NUTRITION

The Educated Horseman Series



Terms and Definitions

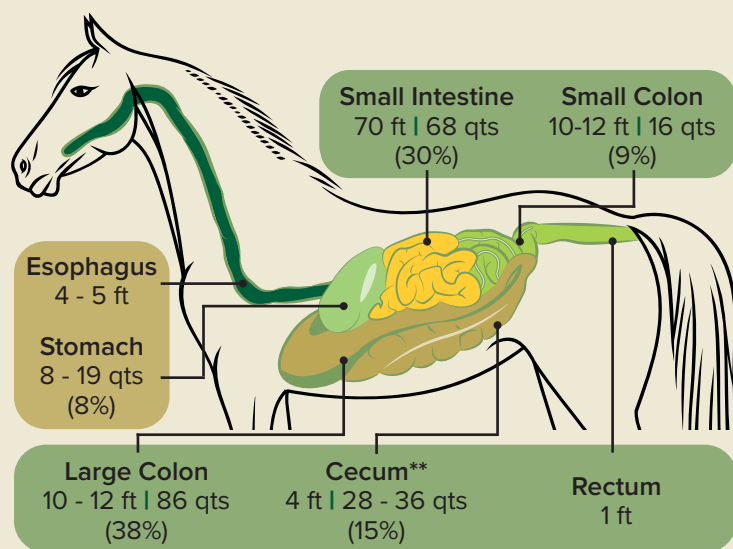
Continual Grazers: Graze 16 hours/day

Non-Ruminant Hindgut Fermenters: Require roughage

Monogastric Digestive System: Small stomach (2-4 gallons) with large intestine making up 60% of GI tract

Horse Digestive System*

*Total percentage does not include the esophagus or rectum



**Located behind the large colon



Part of Foregut



Part of Hindgut

2% of body weight in quality forage daily
20 pounds for a 1,000-pound horse

Nutrient Requirements

Water requirements: 10-15 gallons/day

Water should be provided at all times especially in warm weather and during work. Adding electrolytes to your horse's diet will also aid in recovery and encourage them to drink more. During breeding season add 4 tablespoons of loose salt daily.

Protein requirements: 9%-13%

Protein requirements are based on your horse's stage of life and energy expenditure (amount of work). The requirement for the average horse is approximately 10%-11%. Providing enough protein aids in muscle recovery and will replace nitrogen due to sweat loss. Overfeeding protein does not create a "hot" horse.

Energy requirements: 18-25 Mcal/day

Energy requirements are also determined by stage of life and work. It is important to provide free choice quality forage. A horse will naturally increase forage intake when their workload increases. Hard keepers may need to be supplemented with fat and fiber to meet energy requirements. Keep in mind that horses can only digest a maximum of 20% fat in their diet, however since it is considered a "cool" nutrient it may be beneficial for anxious horses. If you choose to add an oil supplement, choose an oil with higher concentrations of omega-3 (DHA and EPA) as it has higher anti-inflammatory response than ALA. The maximum amount of concentrates should be 1% of their daily intake (no more than 5 pounds/feeding). Consider offering alfalfa to keep feed highly palatable and encourage horses to consume their feed.

Vitamin and mineral requirements

All horses, regardless of stage of life, should have access to a mineral block. If providing mineral blocks is not a good option for you, feeding a concentrated feed that has added minerals will be important. It is important to supplement vitamins A and E throughout the winter as they are only found in green grasses. Any horse kept in Louisiana should have access to electrolytes. Adding 4 tablespoons of loose salt to feed daily is sufficient to meet your horse's requirements.

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Feed by weight not volume!

Feeds have different densities and sizes, creating changes in volume and weight that could lead to over- or underfeeding your horse. For example: A 1-pound coffee can will not hold 1 pound of alfalfa cubes. Energy (megacalories or Mcal) in feed is calculated per pound. It is recommended that you weigh your feed a few times, and then you can use the volume of whatever scoop you are using.

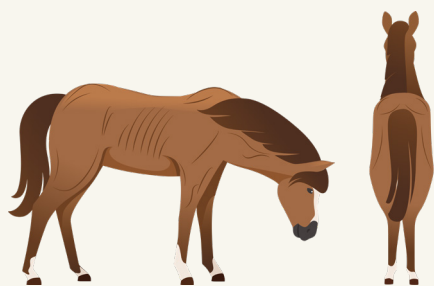


Keep it simple!

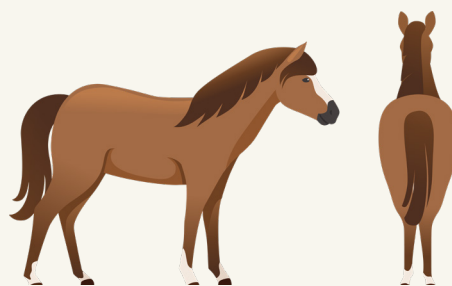
Observe your horse closely. If you notice any change in its condition, adjust your feeding program slowly to adapt to its needs.

Body Condition Score

Body condition score (scale from 1-9) is a measure of excess energy reserves or fat. It does not take into consideration muscle or fitness. It is important that your horse maintains appropriate condition throughout the year. It is equally important that your horse does not become over-conditioned as this can lead to metabolic issues or increased chance of lameness.



BCS 3: Thin



BCS 5: Ideal or Moderate



BCS 8: Fat

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