



Ranvet

HORSING AROUND

FEEDING STRATEGIES

Balancing Act

The feeding of roughage alone provides sufficient energy for maintenance requirements i.e; grazing and digestive efficiency. However, sole feeding of roughage fails to meet the higher energetic demands placed on horses with performance requirements. Therefore the addition of concentrates (i.e; grains) containing a higher energy content enables these energy requirements to be met.

The roughage content should not fall below or 1% of bodyweight.

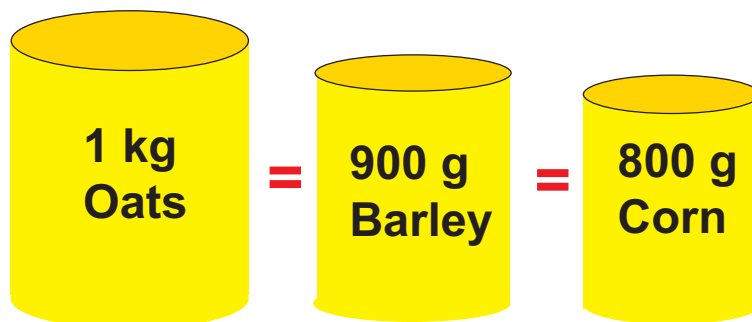
As the energy demands placed on horses increase, so too does the proportion of grain to roughage required. It must be considered that the horse has evolved to digest roughage efficiently and consequently, in order to maintain gastrointestinal health, motility and minimize digestive dysfunction, roughage content must be supplied at adequate levels. The only exceptions are growing weanling and yearling rations whose grain intake may increase up to 60% of the total ration.

The following can be used as a general rule of thumb;

	Discipline	Fibre%	Concentrate %
Light Work	Basic dressage, recreational riding	80	20
Moderate Work	School horses, showing	75	25
Heavy Work	Advanced dressage, show jumping	50-60	40-50
Very Heavy Work	Endurance, Polo & 3 day eventing	45	55

Feeding Weight vs Volume

It is common practice to feed horses by filling the volume of a dipper or cup. However, it must be remembered that the density of concentrates varies considerably. In order to provide an accurate feeding program, the feedstuffs must be weighed to allow for the difference in densities. Therefore preventing over or underfeeding of feed components, in particular starch based feeds (i.e; cereal grains and pre-mixes) in which an excess can lead to metabolic disturbances such as tying up, laminitis and hindgut acidosis.



SCIENCE

INNOVATION

EXCELLENCE

'Complete Feeds' vs Cereal Grain Rations

The use of 'complete feeds' have increased in popularity in the last ten years due to the ease of handling, storage and convenience of feeding. While 'complete feeds' provide a set level of nutrients in each bag, they may not suit all feeding regimens;

Research has shown 63% of 'complete feed' or part thereof rations are deficient in more than 1 nutrient.

Points to Consider

- ✓ If the recommended feeding rate on the bag is not being provided, the horse may not be receiving the required nutrients and an increase in feed intake or further supplementation may need to occur.
- ✓ The protein and energy are unable to be modified independently and this does not allow for any adjustments which may be needed.
- ✓ Vitamins (specifically B-Group vitamins) are highly oxidisable when exposed to air and light commonly occur once bags are opened.

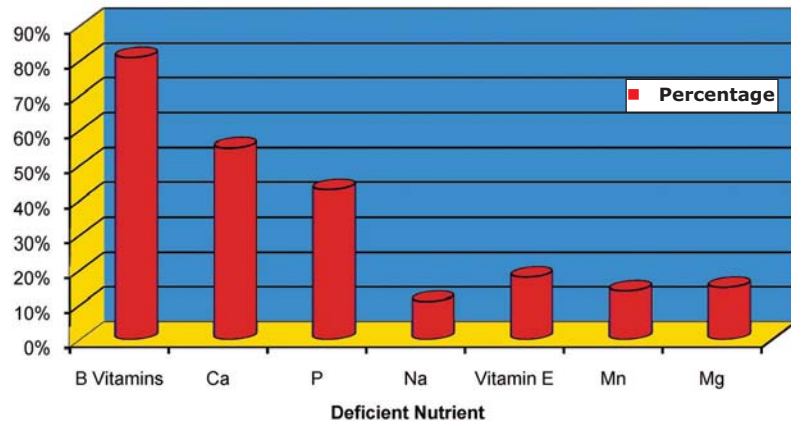
Cereal Grain Rations

Cereal grain based rations have been the basis of horse feeding programs for many years. The flexibility and control of cereal grain based rations provide owners with the confidence their horses are receiving adequate nutrients. However, the main drawback when feeding a grain based ration is the time and labour required to mix and prepare the feed. Thereby, providing a void in the horse feed market which complete feeds have serviced. With an increased understanding of the horses' nutritional requirements through greater research in recent years, custom tailored feeding programs designed by equine nutritionists have taken the guess work out of balancing a ration.

A recent study which analysed the nutrient content of over 300 performance horse rations ascertained the following nutrients were deficient in over 70% of rations:

zinc, copper, iodine, Vitamin E and B-Group vitamins. Thus signifying the need for greater understanding of what and how horse owners are feeding in order to address relevant nutritional concerns to ensure optimal nutrient levels are supplied.

Commonly Deficient Nutrients in Analysed Rations



Key Points to Remember:

- Feed a minimum 1% of bodyweight daily by way of fibre/roughage.
- Adjust fibre: concentrate ratio according to workload.
- Read bagged feed nutrient label and determine if appropriate for your horses' energetic and vitamin/mineral requirements.
- Feed according to bag recommendation.
- If unsure, seek advice from your equine nutritionist or veterinarian.
- Have the ration analysed to prevent any nutrient deficiencies or excesses. This is of particular importance for growing horse rations.

Ranvet's Nutritional Consultation Service for your horse's every need;

- Customised diets
- Energetic demands
- Vitamin & electrolyte requirement
- Growth & development needs
- Correcting metabolic disturbance

SCIENCE

INNOVATION

EXCELLENCE