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EQUINE HOSPITAL

Equine Nutrition: Feeding the Horse for Health and Performance

Erica R. Barrett DVM

Proper nutrition is essential to a horse's overall health, longevity, and performance.

Horses are grazing animals with digestive systems designed to process small amounts of forage continuously throughout the day. Understanding their basic nutritional needs helps owners make informed feeding decisions and prevent common health problems.

Forage—such as pasture grass and hay—should make up the majority of a horse's diet.

Most adult horses require 1.5–2% of their body weight per day in forage. Forage provides fiber, which is critical for proper gut function and helps prevent issues such as colic and gastric ulcers.

High-quality hay should be clean, mold-free, and appropriate for the horse's age and workload.

Common forage types include grass hay, alfalfa, or mixed hay.

Not all horses need grain. Concentrates are typically added only when forage alone cannot meet a horse's energy needs, such as in growing horses, performance horses, broodmares, or those with high caloric demands. Overfeeding grain can lead to obesity, laminitis, and digestive upset. Commercial feeds are often balanced with vitamins and minerals and are safer than feeding straight grains. When choosing a concentrate, it is important to evaluate the nutritional contents, ingredients and feeding instructions. Most feed companies will happily walk clients through these factors via online resources or phone consultation.

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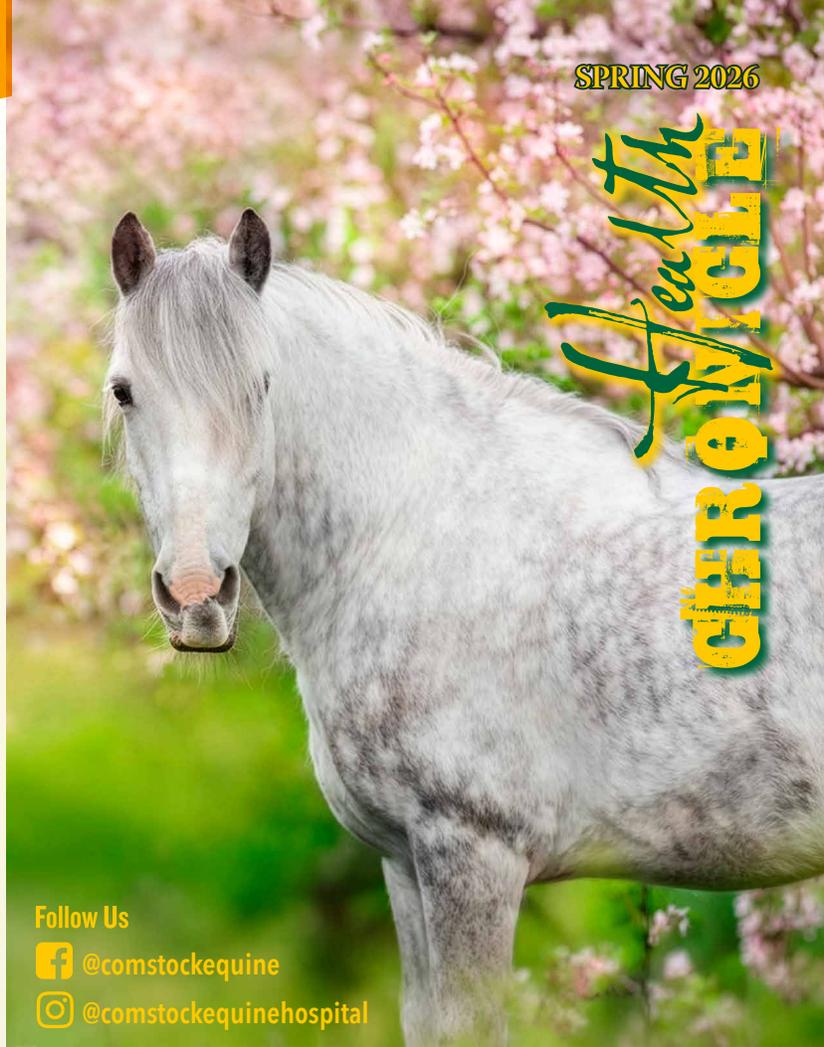
Fresh, clean water should be available at all times. Horses may drink 5–15 gallons per day, depending on size, diet, weather, and activity level. Inadequate water intake can lead to dehydration, impaction colic, and reduced feed consumption. Adding water to concentrates or pelleted forage products, such as timothy or alfalfa pellets, creates a “mash” which can significantly increase horse's water consumption during winter months.

Horses require a balanced intake of minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, salt, and trace minerals. Most horses are deficient in salt and benefit from the addition of salt to their diet.

Unfortunately, offering a salt lick or block does not meet their daily requirements; although it can be a fun enrichment tool. Slowly adding 1-2 tablespoons of salt to the horse's daily feed program is recommended.

Many horses also require a vitamin/mineral supplement if their diet consists mainly of hay. A palatable feed option to meet these needs includes a

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ration balancer which is intended to be fed 1-2 pounds per day. Loose minerals provided in forage balancers are also an excellent option for clients who prefer a forage-based diet, and they are typically added to forage pellets daily. Imbalances—especially in calcium and phosphorus—can negatively affect bone health and overall metabolism. As always, remember to feed according to your horse's weight and specific requirements.

Sudden changes in diet can disrupt the horse's sensitive digestive system. Any feed changes should be made gradually over 7–10 days. Feeding smaller, more frequent meals and maintaining a consistent routine helps support digestive health. Monitoring body condition score is also important to ensure the horse is neither underweight nor overweight. Purchasing a weight tape can be a useful tool for monitoring weight when used correctly.

Every horse is unique. Age, breed, workload, health status, and environment all influence nutritional requirements. Some horses may benefit from being



on special diets or concentrates aimed at preventing or managing specific diseases such as joint disease or gastric ulcers. Regular consultation with a veterinarian or equine nutritionist helps ensure the diet remains appropriate as the horse's needs change.

A forage-based diet, access to clean water, balanced nutrients, and consistent feeding practices form the foundation of good equine nutrition. By understanding and meeting these basic needs, owners can support their horse's health, performance, and overall well-being.

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SPRING VACCINE CLINIC SCHEDULE

Area	Day	Date
Washoe Valley 1	Mon	2-Mar
Washoe Valley 2	Thurs	12-Mar
Washoe Valley 3	Wed	8-Apr
Washoe Valley 4	Tues	5-May
SW Reno 1	Tues	3-Mar
SW Reno 2	Wed	11-Mar
SW Reno 3	Mon	6-Apr
SW Reno 4	Mon	20-Apr
Mt. Rose/Pleasant Valley 1	Mon	9-Mar
Mt. Rose/Pleasant Valley 2	Wed	15-Apr
Lemmon/Antelope Valley 1	Wed	4-Mar
Lemmon/Antelope Valley 2	Tues	10-Mar
Lemmon/Antelope Valley 3	Thurs	23-Apr
Lemmon/Antelope Valley 4	Fri	8-May
Spanish Springs 1	Mon	2-Mar
Spanish Springs 2	Wed	11-Mar
Spanish Springs 3	Fri	24-Apr
Spanish Springs 4	Wed	29-Apr
North Valleys 1	Fri	13-Mar
North Valleys 2	Tues	28-Apr
Golden/Sun Valley 1	Fri	6-Mar
Golden/Sun Valley 2	Tues	12-May
Carson/Dayton 1	Thurs	5-Mar
Carson/Dayton 2	Tues	24-Mar
Carson/Dayton 3	Fri	3-Apr
Toll Rd/VC Highlands 1	Tues	10-Mar
Toll Rd/VC Highlands 2	Wed	1-Apr
West Reno/Verdi-Mogul	Wed	25-Mar
Palomino Valley 1	Thurs	5-Mar
Palomino Valley 2	Thurs	26-Mar
Palomino Valley 3	Mon	20-Apr
Stagecoach/Silver Springs 1	Fri	27-Mar
Stagecoach/Silver Springs 2	Mon	11-May

SPRING CLINIC PRICING

Farm Call	45
Physical/Wellness Exam	45
Core Innovator with Rabies	63
EWT WN Innovator	59
Vetera Gold (EWT, West Nile, F/R)	95
Flu/Rhino	48
Rabies	30
Deworm	33
Deworm (Foal/Mini)	23
Fecal Exam	30
Clean Sheath	62
Sedation- Starts At	55
Coggins	52
Health Certificate	45
Health Certificate Additional Horse	30
EECVI (6 Month Health Certificate)	114

Prices of dewormers vary depending on what deworming strategy your horse requires. A 10% discount will be applied to owners with 5 or more horses, and the farm call fee will be waived. Not applicable with any other discount. **Manufacturer's Immunization Support Guarantee: The vaccine company will pay for diagnostic & treatment costs up to \$5000 for your horse if he or she has been vaccinated by one of our doctors and becomes infected by West Nile, Influenza, Tetanus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and/or Western Equine Encephalitis within 1 year of vaccination. This guarantee excludes Strangles & Rhino virus.**



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We are offering our dentistry prices at \$245 plus sedatives. Sheath cleanings may be added for the discounted price of \$62.

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- Full Mouth Speculum Examination
- Dental Equilibration (performed with hand & power tools)

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COMSTOCK EQUINE HOSPITAL

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