



FEEDING HORSES IN WINTER

Winter can be a tricky time of year for feeding horses, especially if you have older horses or horses that lose weight easily. Feeding the right diet during winter will help keep your horses healthy and in good body condition. Here are some tips on how you can do it:

1. PREPARE FOR WINTER EARLY

Use late summer and autumn while the temperatures are still comfortable and the pasture and hay quality still high to get your horse in good shape for winter. All horses during this period need to be fed a balanced diet (more on this soon) to make sure they are generally healthy and their immune systems fully functional.

If your horse tends to lose weight over winter it can be fed a little more than normal during this time to get a bit of extra condition on them, so if they lose weight during winter they won't end up being too skinny.

You should also be looking to buy hay in summer as availability and quality are high but demand is lower meaning you will get a good quality product for less than you will pay in winter.

2. FEED PLENTY OF FORAGE

Forage (hay, chaff and pasture) provides your horse with many of the calories they will need to maintain weight during winter. Aside from that, forage will **keep your horse warm in winter**. During the digestion of forages in the horse's gut, bacteria ferment the fibrous portions. One of the 'by-products' of this fermentation is heat, and it is this heat that really helps a horse to stay warm during winter.

Because of the 'warming' properties of forage, your horse will benefit more from an additional feed of hay than an extra feed of grain, pellets or sweet feed in very wet, cold weather.

3. CONDITION SCORE YOUR HORSE REGULARLY

Don't throw a rug on your horse in winter and leave it on for weeks on end without taking it off to check your horse's body condition (and of course that it doesn't have any injuries or sores that are covered by the rug). Condition scoring involves looking at areas on your horse's body such as the top of the neck, the wither, over the ribs and over the loin to assess the amount of body fat (which we call body condition) your horse is carrying.

4. ADJUST YOUR HORSE'S DIET TO CONTROL BODY WEIGHT

Because you will be condition scoring your horse regularly you will know if your horse is maintaining, gaining, or losing weight. Depending on what you want your horse to be doing, you may need to adjust the diet to keep your horse at the bodyweight and condition you want.

If your horse is gaining unwanted weight, you will need to reduce or remove high energy feeds like grains, pellets, sweet feeds or oils in the diet. If your horse is losing weight that you don't want him to lose, you may need to feed more calories in the diet. You can do this by:

1. Feeding more hay and if you're not already doing so feeding some alfalfa/lucerne hay.
2. Adding high energy feeds to the diet like pellets, sweet feeds, oil or high energy fibres like beet pulp. Use the

best quality feeds you can afford and if using a sweet feed look for one that contains extruded grains as these are more digestible for horses.

Pryde's use extruded grains for best digestibility. This means more nutrients are available in a smaller volume of feed which can not only be more cost effective, but also reduces the risk of digestive upset by feeding larger quantities of concentrate in one feed.

5. FEED A BALANCED DIET

An unbalanced diet doesn't meet your horse's requirements for each of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals so your horse won't be as healthy as he could or should be. Nutrient deficiencies can lead to:

- Weight loss
- Muscle wastage
- Increased susceptibility to diseases like greasy heel and respiratory disease
- Dull, dry coat and skin
- Brittle and slow growing hooves
- Suppressed immune systems

Pryde's winter feed options are all totally balanced and with the highest digestive efficiency and best quality protein sources, can reduce or eliminate the need for unnecessary and costly supplements.

6. BEWARE OF LAMINITIS

For horses susceptible to laminitis (including overweight horses, horses with Cushing's Disease or those who have previously had laminitis) winter can be a danger period.

If your horse is at risk you should:

1. Restrict your horse's access to pasture to only the very early hours of the morning up until 11 am.
2. Feed low sugar hay and avoid hays made from ryegrass or cereals like oats or wheat.
3. Avoid all feeds with grain or grain by-products in them.

Beware: Most feeds that claim to be grain free are NOT. Read the label of all feeds carefully. If they contain anything like bran, pollard, millmix or millrun do not feed them to a horse prone to laminitis.

Pryde's Easi Sport is the perfect feed for metabolic conditions. A totally non grain and non grain by-product feed with less than 1.1% starch and 7% sugar content. A high fibre based energy feed which includes the best quality proteins to help your horse with metabolic diseases to hold condition.

7. ADD A LITTLE OIL TO THE DIET

A horse's coat can become dry and dull during winter. To help keep the coat and skin healthy, add 1/4 cup of oil to the diet.

Try Pryde's Easi Oil, our high quality cold pressed canola oil with the right ratio of omega 3:omega 6 fatty acids. Mild flavour to tempt the fussiest eaters and cold pressed for stability and longer shelf life.