



October 17, 2017

Press Release

10 Things to Remember When Feeding This Winter

As we stare into the depths of winter, our horses will be spending longer periods in the stable with limited access to grazing, if any. Any grazing that is still readily available will have little or no nutritional value to most horses.

Every horse is different, so getting the balance right during winter can sometimes be a challenge to maintain condition and ensure health and wellbeing.

Here Alltech reminds us of 10 things we should remember when feeding our horses this winter.

1. Start with fibre - Fibre should always be the starting point for, and basis of, any horse's diet, making up at least 60% of the horse's total rations. This is true, regardless of the lifestyle of the horse.
2. Allow access to plenty of forage - Horses have evolved to require a minimum amount of dietary fibre as a food source for the micro-organisms located in the caecum and large intestine, collectively called the hindgut. This also satisfies a horse's natural desire to chew, therefore helping to prevent boredom during long periods when stabled.
3. Ensure your forage is of the highest quality - Purchase forage from a reputable source to avoid the risk of mycotoxin poisoning. Mycotoxins are toxic chemicals produced by some types of mould growth under certain environmental conditions and occur on growing, harvested or stored cereal and forage crops. Horses are exposed to mycotoxins through contaminated feed and forage and are highly susceptible, as a species, to toxicity.
4. Feed according to workload and condition – If your horse is still in hard work over winter or struggles to maintain weight, he may require extra calories. If not, cut feed rations accordingly. Feeding a good doer unnecessary hard feed will only lead to extra weight gain.
5. Consider an alternative fibre source for veterans - One of the biggest factors

facing veteran horses and ponies is deteriorating dentition, which has a knock-on effect on body condition, as they find it increasingly difficult to chew long forage. Consider an alternative such as sugar-beet pulp or high fibre cubes that can be soaked to a mash.

6. Ensure your horse is receiving enough vitamins and minerals – Some good doers could easily make it through winter on a diet of forage alone, however this might not be meeting their vitamin and mineral requirements. To balance the diet, feed a good quality vitamin and mineral supplement in a small quantity of hard feed.

7. Keep meals small and often – Horses can only digest very small amounts of starch at any one time and, consequently, the small intestine can struggle to deal with large concentrated meals. Receiving excess dietary starch often reduces the ability of the hindgut to maintain a near-neutral pH, which can lead to acidic conditions, often referred to as acidosis.

8. Introduce feed gradually – Any change to the diet must be made gradually to reduce the risk of digestive disturbances, this includes new forage. Mix a new batch of hay with old, introducing to the diet over a period of time.

9. Central heating for horses – The digestive system is the horse's very own central heating system that is fuelled by fibre. The fermentation of fibre in the hind gut acts as a horse's very own central heating system, keeping them warm from the inside out. This is why feeding adequate forage during the winter months is vital.

10. Supplement the diet with yeast cultures - Yeast cultures help reduce hind gut acidity, creating the optimum conditions for the beneficial bacteria to flourish and therefore improve digestion as well as nutrient absorption.

The Lifeforce Range of all-natural, daily digestive aid supplements from Alltech is designed to benefit horses of every stage of life, from breeding stock to pleasure and performance animals.

For further information please visit www.lifeforcehorse.co.uk or telephone 01780 764512.

ENDS