

Animal nutrition company, Alltech® are leading the way in the research of mycotoxins. Here they explain why good hygiene is so important.

Hygienic Feed Management to Reduce Mycotoxin Contamination

Mycotoxins are produced by some types of mould growth under certain conditions and can occur in growing, harvested or stored cereal and forage crops. One of the key difficulties in identifying risk is that mycotoxins can be present without the presence of mould. Equally, not all mould growth indicates the presence of mycotoxins.



Wash feed buckets regularly to reduce the risk of potential exposure to mycotoxins.

Feed mills and producers have a responsibility to ensure the feed you buy is free from contamination and fit for consumption by the animal. Cereals commonly used in feed manufacture are routinely tested for certain mycotoxins and, if levels are sufficient, the sample or batch is rejected.

However, horse owners can also help in the fight against mycotoxin contamination by controlling the storage and feeding of forage, cereals and bedding. By following some simple steps horse owners can develop their own 'risk assessment'. Key areas to think about when trying to reduce contamination are:

Feed:

- Check hay and haylage, as well as bedding material for moulds and mycotoxins – this can be a visual check and/or laboratory test.
- Offer only fresh feed.
- Store feed and forage in dry, cool conditions.
- Use haylage within 2-3 days of opening.
- Check temperature of haylage – hot haylage indicates the presence of yeasts and moulds. You can do this with either a temperature probe or by sticking your hand into the bale, it should feel cool.
- Avoid soaking hay for prolonged periods.

Water:

- Clean water buckets/troughs/utensils regularly.
- Check for signs of mould etc and remove.
- Check for contamination of other contaminants e.g. heavy metals.

Equipment:

- Clean and wash out feed bins between batches and feed buckets after each use – ensure they are dry before storage and their next use.
- Store feed in a dry, well-ventilated area.
- Keep all additional feeding equipment, such as scoops and mixing spoons clean.
- Address the risk of rodents/pests including birds.

Environment:

- Check the ventilation in stables and barns – cobwebs are a good indicator that there is no air movement in that area.
- Check moisture levels in feed storage areas.
- Check for the presence of moulds, particularly on wooden structures.
- Disinfect feed rooms regularly.
- Avoid over-grazing pastures.

Creating a checklist or flow cart that is kept on the yard and that everyone understands is an excellent way to help reduce the risk of a potential mycotoxin problem. Useful tools to have include a torch, disposable gloves, disinfectant and zip-lock bags for any samples.

Overall, keeping equipment clean and ensuring storage conditions are well-ventilated, dry and cool will go a long way to reducing the exposure of horses to mycotoxins.

Mycosorb A+® from Alltech is the next generation of mycotoxin binders, offering superior binding capabilities, a broader adsorption profile and increased efficacy, reducing mycotoxin adsorption within the horse, thereby negating the damaging effects of mycotoxins on its health.

The unique technology behind Mycosorb A+ makes it the most advanced mycotoxin binder on the market, offering many advantages over the alternative clay binders, which have been known to remove key nutrients from the diet.

For further information on managing the threat from mycotoxins, please visit www.knowmycotoxins.com or call 01780 764512 today.

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