

What stalled horses need from their diet

Stalled horses need a **fibre-led** diet built around regular access to **forage**, because their digestive system is designed to process roughage for long periods rather than large meals of rich feed. The foundation should usually be **hay** or **wrapped forage**, depending on what suits the horse and the quality available. The aim is to support **digestive health**, maintain healthy **fibre** intake, and reduce the risk of boredom, stress, and digestive upset.

For horses kept in stalls, forage does more than fill the belly. It encourages saliva production, supports **intestinal health**, and helps maintain a stable digestive environment. Good-quality fibre is especially important because stalled horses often have less movement and may have a more limited feeding routine than horses living out. That makes consistent roughage intake even more important.

The best horse feed for a stalled horse is rarely just “more feed”. It is the right balance of forage, water, and any supplementary feed needed to meet **energy requirements**, protein needs, and **mineral balance**. In many cases, the base diet should prioritise hay or haylage first, with additional **horse feed** only if the horse needs extra condition, performance support, or targeted nutrients.

A stalled horse that is idle or lightly worked may need very little concentrate. A horse in harder **workload** may need a more **substantial** ration, but even then the best approach is still usually fibre-led. Look for digestible fibre, moderate **protein levels**, controlled **starch level**, and sensible **sugar content**.

Leading types of horse feed for horses kept in stalls

Several **types of horse feed** that can meet the needs of stalled horses, but they serve different purposes. The right option depends on whether the horse needs weight support, managed energy, more vitamins and minerals, or support for particular work demands. In most stalled horses, the best choice is one that works alongside forage rather than taking its place.

A **complete horse feed** is designed to provide a broad nutrient profile in one product. Some are intended to be fed with little or no additional balancer, while others still work best alongside ample forage. These feeds can be helpful if a horse is fussy, if stable management needs streamlining, or if you want a more simple feeding routine.

A **horse feed mix** usually mixes cereals, fibre sources, and other ingredients to provide energy and palatability. These can be useful for horses needing more calories, but they may also contain more starch. That makes them less suitable for horses that are prone to excitable behaviour, digestive sensitivity, or weight gain.

Concentrates are denser in energy than forage and are used to top up the diet where hay or haylage alone is not enough. However, concentrates should be chosen carefully. For stalled horses, a fibre-rich conditioning feed is often more suitable to a cereal-heavy option, especially when the goal is controlled weight gain or support for light to moderate work.

If you are comparing feeds, think in terms of what the horse actually needs:

- Increased fibre and chewing time
- Measured calories for weight maintenance or gain
- Reduced to moderate starch for calmer behaviour and better gut stability
- Extra vitamins and minerals if forage alone is not enough
- Good palatability without over-reliance on sugar or starch

A practical **horse feed mix recipe** at home should still stick to the same principles: choose forage-based ingredients, avoid loading the ration with excess energy, and keep the overall diet nutritionally balanced. If you are unsure, an **equine nutritionist** can help you design a sensible ration around the horse's needs.

How to choose the best feed by workload, age, and condition

The best horse feed depends on the horse's age, body type, current **workload**, and **body condition score**. A stalled horse may drop weight through stress, poor appetite, or insufficient forage, but another may become overweight from too much concentrate and too little movement. That is why a feed choice should always start with evaluation, not guessing.

A **horse feeding chart** is useful for building a starting point. It helps you estimate ration size based on bodyweight, work level, and whether the horse is holding, gaining, or losing weight. A **horse feed calculator uk** can also be useful for planning daily intake, but these tools should be used alongside practical observation and, where needed, professional guidance.

Body condition score is one of the simplest and most reliable ways to decide whether the current ration is working. If ribs are too visible, muscle is lacking, or top-line is poor, the horse may need more calories, better-quality forage, or a more suitable conditioning feed. If the horse is carrying excess fat, the ration may need trimming back, particularly where starch or unnecessary supplementary feed is involved.

Age matters too. Young horses may need more support for growth, while older horses may need easier-to-chew fibre and better digestibility. The same feed may not suit both. A horse in light hacking may do well on forage and a balancer, while a horse in regular schooling or jumping may need additional calories and protein.

Use this framework when deciding what to feed:

- **Light workload:** forage first, with a balancer if vitamins and minerals are lacking
- **Moderate workload:** fibre-based feed with extra calories if needed
- **Hard workload:** more energy-dense but still controlled in starch
- **Poor condition:** improve forage quality first, then add a conditioning feed if required
- **Easy keeper:** restrict unnecessary calories and focus on nutrient density rather than bulk

If you are unsure, an equine nutritionist can assess the overall ration and help you fine-tune the **daily ration** based on bodyweight and work.

Feeding rules for horses every owner should follow

Solid **horse feeding rules** are vital for stalled horses because routine matters. The digestive tract is built for regular intake of roughage, not large, infrequent meals. The **10 rules of feeding horses** are straightforward, but they are easy to overlook when stable routines are packed.

Initially, keep **feeding frequency** steady. Small, regular meals are better than large servings that leave big gaps. Next, make sure **fresh water** is constantly available. Water intake supports the digestive process, feed passage, and normal hydration, especially when the horse is on dry forage.

Third, avoid making drastic changes to the ration. The horse's gut microbes need time to adjust, so any new feed should be introduced gradually. Sudden changes can disrupt digestive health and increase the risk of **colic**. Last, never use feed as a substitute for adequate forage.

More important rules include:

- Feed in line with bodyweight, condition, and workload
- Keep forage the base of the diet
- Limit unnecessary starch-heavy meals
- Check the feed label before buying
- Keep feed stored properly to preserve quality
- Modify the ration when the horse's work or condition changes
- Look for signs of stress, poor appetite, or digestive change

This guidance are part of practical horse feed advice uk owners can apply every day. They are simple, but they protect the horse's gut health and make feeding more predictable. If your horse is on a strict stable routine, consistency matters even more.

When a fully balanced horse feed makes sense

A **complete horse feed** can work well when you want a single solution that provides more than just calories. These feeds are often made with **vitamins and minerals**, fibre, protein, and energy in one ration. They are especially useful where management is simpler if the horse gets most of its nutrients from one feed bucket alongside **forage first** feeding.

That said, "complete" does not necessarily mean "best" for every horse. Some complete feeds still contain a considerable amount of **starch**, which may not suit horses with digestive sensitivity or those that are highly spirited. Others are ideal for horses that need a balanced diet but do not require much additional hard feed.

Complete feeds can be a practical choice if:

- The horse is picky and needs a tasty, reliable ration
- You want to simplify feeding without balancing several products
- The forage analysis suggests nutrient gaps
- The horse needs more than hay or haylage alone can provide
- You want to improve mineral intake without adding unnecessary bulk

Even with a complete feed, the main diet should still be based on forage. The complete feed should support the ration, not replace hay or haylage. For stalled horses, this approach helps support digestive health and maintain a calmer daily feeding pattern.

Feed guides, estimators, and real-world ration planning

A **horse feeding chart** provides a practical starting point for portion planning, but it should not ever be used blindly. Horses change in metabolism, temperament, appetite, and how effectively they use feed. A **horse feed calculator uk** can help estimate a first **daily ration**, but the final plan should be modified using body condition and [overweight horse feed](#) work response.

The biggest part of portion planning is usually **hay intake**. Forage makes up the largest part of the ration for most stalled horses, and any concentrate or complete feed should be fitted around that. If the horse is not getting enough hay or haylage, no amount of bucket feed will fully compensate for the lack of roughage.

When building a ration, ask these questions:

- Is horse keeping weight on current forage?

- Does the horse need extra calories, or just more balanced nutrients?
- Is the feed too high in starch for the horse's temperament or digestive needs?
- Is the horse getting enough long-stem forage?
- Does the ration match the horse's workload and body condition score?

As a straightforward approach, start with forage, then add a balancer or small amount of supplementary feed if needed. Increase in small steps and monitor condition. If the horse begins to lose or gain too quickly, adjust the ration rather than waiting for the problem to become obvious.

How much horse feed costs as well as what affects the price

Horse feed cost can vary a lot, and price alone doesn't reveal whether a feed offers solid value. The key is **feed value**: what nutrients you are getting for the money, how much you need to feed each day, and whether the product suits the horse's needs without waste.

Several factors affect cost. Different **horse feed companies** choose different ingredient profiles, quality standards, and formulation methods. **Bag size** also matters, because larger bags may have a better unit price even if the upfront price is higher. A more concentrated feed may seem expensive but can be a smarter buy if you need to feed less of it.

When comparing products, consider:

- Unit cost, not just bag price
- How long the bag lasts at the recommended ration
- Whether the feed replaces other supplements
- How much forage remains the main calorie source
- Whether the feed is appropriate for the horse's current condition

A feed with better feed value may cost more upfront but save money overall if it delivers the right nutrition with less waste. For stalled horses, the most cost-effective option is often a forage-led ration with targeted supplementation rather than an overcomplicated bucket feed plan.

Picking a feed manufacturer and evaluating products

There are many **horse feed companies** on the market, and the most effective way to compare them is by looking closely at the **ingredient list** and **nutritional analysis**. Don't depend on branding alone. The feed label tells you far more about whether a product suits a stalled horse.

For example, **spillers horse feed** is one of the best-known names, but the right product still depends on the individual horse. A brand may offer different feeds for condition, performance, fibre support, or balancer use. The question is not which brand is best in general, but which formula best matches the horse's needs.

When comparing products, review:

- The first ingredients on the list
- Fibre content and digestibility
- Starch level and sugar content
- The quality of protein and amount
- Levels of vitamins and minerals

- Feeding rate and daily cost

This is where a close read of the feed label matters. A feed that looks suitable on the front of the bag may not be the best choice if the starch level is higher than ideal or if the ration would still need extra supplements to be balanced.

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Common feeding mistakes with stalled horses

Some of the biggest problems with stalled horses come from feeding mistakes rather than from the horse itself. The biggest risk is **overfeeding**, especially when a horse is stabled for long periods and is not using as much energy as the feed provides. Overfeeding can lead to excess weight, restless behaviour, and digestive stress.

Another major issue is feeding too much starch too quickly. High-starch meals may increase the risk of gut upset and can contribute to **colic**. Horses with sensitive digestion or poor tolerance for richer diets may also develop discomfort or behavioural changes.

Other common mistakes include:

- **Sudden diet change** without gradual transition
- Failing to offer enough forage
- Relying on concentrates when the horse only needs better fibre
- Ignoring changes in body condition
- Providing insufficient water
- Feeding by habit rather than by current need

Ulcers can also be a concern in stalled horses, especially if there are long gaps without forage, stress in the stable, or a diet that is too concentrated. A softer forage-focused ration and regular routine are important parts of prevention. If the horse shows signs of discomfort, reduced appetite, or a poor coat and condition, reassess the feeding plan quickly.

Advice on horse feed for new owners

If you are new to managing a stable, begin with simple **horse feed for beginners** tips: feed forage first, keep the routine consistent, and make changes little by little. You do not need an elaborate feeding plan to do well. Many stalled horses flourish on a **forage-based diet** with a suitably chosen balancer or a small amount of supplementary feed.

Vet advice is important if the horse has weight loss, reduced appetite, recurring digestive issues, lameness that affects workload, or a medical condition that changes nutritional needs. If the horse is older, underweight, or prone to **colic**, professional input becomes even more valuable. An **equine nutritionist** can also help when you want to adjust the ration to condition, age, and performance.

Beginner-friendly feeding should include **condition monitoring** every week or two. Look at body shape, topline, rib coverage, energy levels, and droppings. Small changes tell you whether the ration is effective. A good plan is

usually straightforward to understand: enough hay or haylage, clean water, a feed that matches the horse's needs, and gradual adjustments as needed.

If you are unsure how to choose, prioritise these priorities:

- The quality of forage and availability
- Overall weight and body condition score
- Present workload
- The starch content and sugar content
- If the horse requires extra vitamins and minerals

FAQ: stalled horse feeding questions answered

Which horse feed is best for a horse in a stall?

The best horse feed for a stalled horse is usually a forage-based ration based on hay or haylage, with a fibre-based bucket feed only if extra nutrients or calories are needed. Look for good digestible fibre, controlled starch, and a balanced mineral profile. The exact best feed choice depends on workload, age, and body condition score.

Do stalled horses need complete horse feed, or is hay enough?

Some stalled horses do well on just hay or haylage if the forage is good enough and the horse maintains condition. Others need a complete horse feed to provide missing vitamins and minerals or extra calories. The decision should be based on the horse's workload, body condition, and overall ration rather than on convenience alone.

How much horse feed can I give per day?

No single answer exists because the ideal daily ration depends on bodyweight, workload, forage quality, and the horse's current state. Follow a horse feeding chart or a horse feed calculator uk as a starting point, then fine-tune based on condition monitoring. For most stalled horses, forage remains the largest part of the ration.

What are the core horse feeding rules to follow?

The key horse feeding rules include keeping a steady feeding schedule, providing fresh water at all times, increasing feed gradually, prioritising forage, and avoiding sudden diet change. These are part of the 10 rules of feeding horses that help maintain digestive health and reduce the risk of colic.

How do I choose horse feed for beginners?

If you are choosing horse feed for beginners, start with a forage-based diet and select a straightforward feed that matches the horse's workload and body condition. Review the ingredient list and nutritional **EMS horse feed** analysis, and ask for horse feed advice uk from a vet or equine nutritionist if you are unsure. The best feed choice is the one that promotes health without overcomplicating the ration.