

# 5 STEPS TO SIMPLE DIETS



**HOW TO CREATE BALANCED DIETS THAT  
TAKE THE STRESS OUT OF FEEDING,  
DON'T COST A FORTUNE (& HAVE YOUR HORSE  
TURNING HEADS EVERYWHERE HE GOES).**

*By Dr Nerida Richards*

B. RUR SC PHD (RANNUTR)

# WHAT YOU'LL LEARN...

Feeding horses gets expensive. It creates confusion, worry and stress. And it can take forever to mix feeds. There are so many products claiming to be 'everything your horse needs'. So many different opinions on how to feed. And so many ways it really can all go horribly wrong.

But what if it wasn't like this... What if you could give your horse everything he needs within the budget you have. And what if you knew, with absolute certainty that what you are feeding is the right thing for your horse.

Let us show you how.

*"Before I found FeedXL I found it really hard feeding my horses a balanced diet, the world of feeding horses is a minefield and completely mind-boggling!"*

EMILY BARTON  
CANTERBURY NEW ZEALAND  
FEEDXL MEMBER SINCE 2017



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# STEP 1: FORAGE FIRST

This is the single most important concept when feeding your horse, because your horse is designed to thrive when his gut is filled with forage.

## IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

1. Why forage is so important
2. How much forage to feed; and
3. Which forages should I feed?





# 01

## WHY FORAGE IS SO IMPORTANT

Your horse's diet **MUST** be based on forage because it:

**KEEPS THE GUT BACTERIA HEALTHY.** Your horse's gut bacteria digest fibre for your horse, produce important hormones for calm behaviour, regulate the immune system and make vitamins for your horse. And they will only thrive when you feed them lots of their favourite food... forage!

**PREVENTS COLIC.** A horse's gut is HUGE. And it has a horrible habit of twisting itself into all the wrong places, resulting in catastrophic colic. One of your best guarantees against colic is to keep the gut full of forage. Because when it is full it is less likely to move somewhere it shouldn't.

**PREVENTS GASTRIC ULCERS.** Your horse's stomach was designed to be constantly FULL of forage. In fact, it relies on being full of forage to stop the strong acid that is secreted in the bottom of the stomach from burning holes and causing ulcers in the top of the stomach. When you feed lots of forage, your horse's risk of ulcers is reduced.

**IT'S YOUR HORSE'S PRIMARY SOURCE OF CALORIES.** Forage is not just filler! It is a significant source of calories. In fact in many cases, it is the only source of calories your horse may need. AND it is the most natural source of calories for your horse. And natural is the BEST! The closer you can feed a horse to the way its gut was designed to function, the better! When you feed a majority of your horse's calories as forage your horse will be calmer. Healthier. And more content!

**KEEPS YOUR HORSE HYDRATED.** Forage holds onto water in the gut and acts as your horse's water storage reservoir. So when your horse needs water, it only needs to extract some from its gut. But this only works when you feed lots of forage.

# 02

## HOW MUCH FORAGE DOES MY HORSE NEED?

It is important to get the amount of forage you feed to your horse right. If you don't feed enough, boredom, ulcers, colic, weight loss and dehydration are the result. On the flip side, if you will fill your horse's gut too much, you will increase the passage rate of the forage through the gut, reducing the amount of time the forage spends in the gut and therefore reducing how well it is digested! See the table below for what ideal amount of forage is for your horse:

<b>BODYWEIGHT (KG)</b>	<b>NOT ENOUGH (KG/DAY)</b>	<b>IDEAL (KG/DAY)</b>	<b>TOO MUCH (KG/DAY)</b>
<b>200</b>	Less than 3	4 to 5	6 +
<b>300</b>	Less than 4.5	6 to 7.5	9 +
<b>400</b>	Less than 6	8 to 10	12 +
<b>500</b>	Less than 7.5	10 to 12.5	15 +
<b>600</b>	Less than 9	12 to 15	18 +

<b>BODYWEIGHT (LB)</b>	<b>NOT ENOUGH (LB/DAY)</b>	<b>IDEAL (LB/DAY)</b>	<b>TOO MUCH (LB/DAY)</b>
<b>440</b>	Less than 6.6	8.8 to 11	13 +
<b>660</b>	Less than 9.9	13.2 to 16.5	20 +
<b>880</b>	Less than 13.2	17.6 to 22	26 +
<b>1100</b>	Less than 16.5	22 to 27.5	33 +
<b>1320</b>	Less than 19.8	26.4 to 33	40 +

Above: Tables showing how much forage  
your horse needs

# 03

## WHICH FORAGES SHOULD I FEED?

The forage you should feed depends on what you have available (e.g pasture, or hay or both), the quality of the available forage and what your horse needs from a calorie and protein perspective.

It is always best to have a variety of forages in your horse's diet. You can use FeedXL.com to work out which combination of forages and how much of each is best for your horse.

Once you have added all the forage you can to your horse's diet it is time to move on to Step 2!



“

*If you don't feed  
enough forage  
boredom, ulcers,  
colic, weight loss  
and dehydration are  
the result*



## STEP 2: TOP UP CALORIES

Sometimes, forage is not 'enough' and you will need to add some higher calorie ingredients to the diet. Horses in work or being bred will often need more calories than forage alone can provide.

### IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

1. How to know if your horse needs more calories.
2. The options for topping calories up.
3. Which options best suit which horses.
4. How to know if you are feeding enough.
5. How to avoid feeding too much.



# 01

## DOES MY HORSE NEED MORE CALORIES?

It is easy to know if your horse needs more calories. If he is losing weight, he needs more calories.

So if you have your horse just on forage and he is losing weight, you need to look at adding some higher calorie ingredients to his diet.

# 02

## WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR TOPPING UP CALORIES?

You have 4 main options when considering ways to top up calories:

**1. COMPLETE FEEDS.** These are feeds that will provide calories plus protein, vitamins and minerals to your horse's diet. It is possible to add these products to top up calories AND add enough protein, vitamins and minerals to the diet to create a fully balanced diet with just this one feed.

When choosing a 'complete feed' look for one with a recommended feeding rate close to the amount you know (or think) your horse will need. That way, when you add it to the diet you will have the best chance of meeting ALL of your horse's requirements with just one product. Simple!

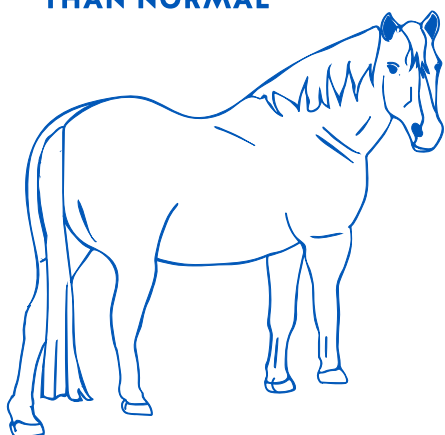
**2. STRAIGHTS.** These are ingredients like oats, cooked barley, cooked maize, stabilized rice bran, lupins, copra meal and sunflower seeds. They can be added to the diet alone, or in a combination of your choosing and can be added in just the right amount to top up calories in your horse's diet.

**3. HIGH ENERGY FIBRES.** This group includes soybean hulls, sugarbeet pulp and lupin hulls. These fibres are almost fully digested and have an energy content similar to oats. Like straights, they can be added alone or in combination to top up your horse's calories.

**4. OILS.** All oils have the same calorie content. And therefore all oils have the same value when being used to top up calories. Oils do vary in their omega fatty acid profiles. If you'd like to know more about this, please read our article on omega fatty acids here:

<https://feedxl.com/29-omega-3/>

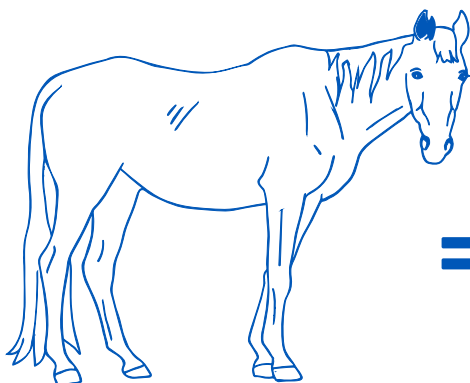
HORSE IS **PUTTING ON CONDITION**  
OR HORSE IS **MORE HYPERACTIVE**  
**THAN NORMAL**



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**FEED  
LESS  
CALORIES**

HORSE IS **LOSING CONDITION**  
OR HORSE IS **A LITTLE DULL\***

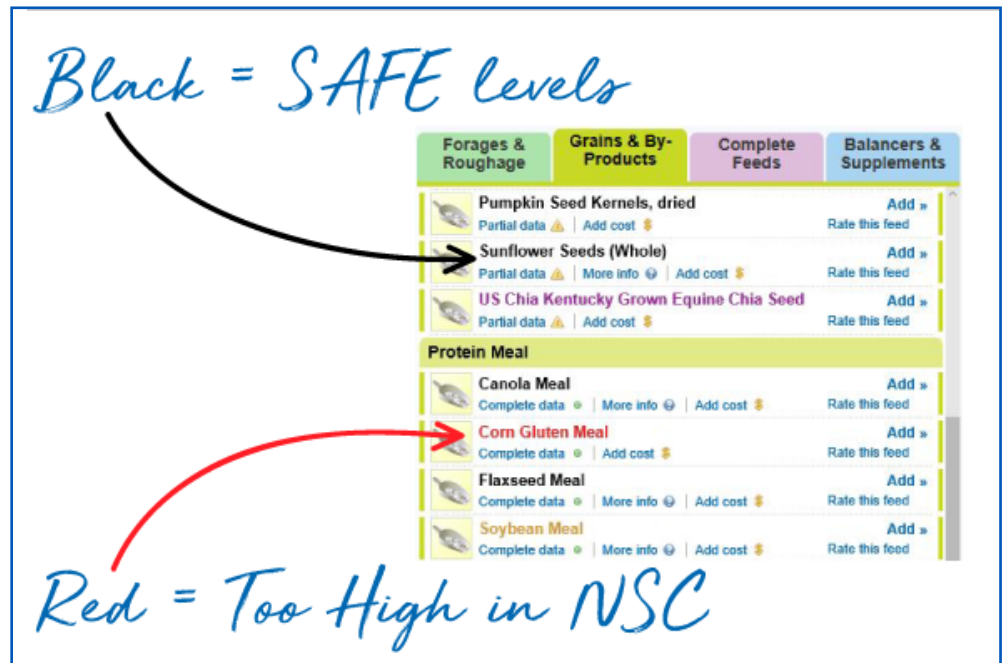


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**FEED  
MORE  
CALORIES**

Above: Diagram showing when you need to  
increase or decrease the calories  
in your horse's diet





Above: in FeedX you can see which ingredients are safe and unsafe for horses with certain disease conditions.

## 03

### WHICH OPTION IS BEST FOR MY HORSE?

The best option for your horse depends on your horse's workload, metabolic type, disease risk (for example prone to laminitis or tying up?) and your personal preference for the way you would like to feed.

FeedXL.com can make choosing the best ingredients to top up your horse's calories really simple. You can:

- Use the *Find Feeds to Fix this Diet* button to search for complete feeds that can fully balance your horse's diet.
- Add combinations of straights, high energy fibres and oils and see when you have added enough calories to meet requirements; and
- See which ingredients are safe and unsafe for horses with certain disease conditions.

## 04

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM FEEDING TOO MUCH?

Simple. Your horse will tell you. If he is gaining weight, he needs less calories.

You may also know you are feeding too much by looking for changes in behaviour. If your horse's behaviour gets hyperactive/hot/difficult this is a sign you have too many calories in the diet.

Listen to your horse. If he is telling you he is getting too many calories, reduce them in his diet! And don't be afraid to keep adjusting the amount you feed on a daily basis, especially if his workload changes from day to day.

## **STEP 3: TOP-UP VITAMINS & MINERALS (WITH ONE PRODUCT)**

So you've got forage sorted and topped up your calories. Your horse looks great. He is holding condition. BUT, what about the bits of the diet you can't see, the vitamins and minerals.

Vitamin and mineral deficiencies are like termites in the foundation of a house, you often won't see them until they show up as a real problem.

### **IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:**

- 1. The problems some vitamin & mineral deficiencies can cause.**
- 2. How to identify vitamin & mineral deficiencies.**
- 3. How to find ONE product that can fill ALL the vitamin and mineral gaps in your horse's diet**

# 01

## THE PROBLEM WITH VITAMIN & MINERAL DEFICIENCIES

The most common vitamin and mineral deficiencies I see in diets are vitamin E, vitamin B1, copper, zinc, selenium and iodine. Deficiency of these nutrients can cause issues like; reduced immune function, weak, brittle and cracked hooves, dull or rough coat, dry, flakey skin, lack of muscle energy, fatigue, loss of appetite, joint degeneration, low red blood cell count, exercise induced muscle damage, weak or dead foals, angular limb deformity, OCD in the joints of growing horses, white muscle disease and reduced fertility.

# 02

## IDENTIFYING VITAMIN & MINERAL DEFICIENCY

The problem with vitamin and mineral deficiencies is you can't see them until they cause a problem. So you can't identify them by 'looking' at your horse until the deficiency is so bad that symptoms start to appear. Please don't wait for this to happen. There is a better way!

Using FeedXL.com, you can enter your horse, its forage and any feed ingredients you are adding to top up calories. THEN you can see which vitamins and minerals are missing from the diet. No guessing. No missing something really important. It is just right there in front of you... the breakdown of which nutrient requirements are met, and which are not.

# 03

## FINDING ONE SUPPLEMENT TO FILL THE GAPS

There are literally thousands of vitamin and mineral supplements available to use in your horse's diet. Some are good. Some are amazing. Some are awful. The overwhelming problem you face is which one is right for your horse and your budget?

Let me give you the simplest solution. Once you have used FeedXL to identify the vitamin and mineral gaps in your horse's diet, click the 'Find Supplements to Fix This Diet' button. This tool will search the FeedXL database of thousands of potential products and give you a ranked list of supplements that will meet all of the vitamin and mineral requirements in the diet.

This is truly the only way I know that you can get an unbiased, scientific and yet really easy assessment of which supplements actually match your horse's needs. PLUS you can add the costs of your favourite options to see which one is the most economical, if this is an important consideration for you!





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*Mineral deficiencies  
can show up as  
weak, brittle and  
cracked hooves*

## STEP 4: GIVE ACCESS TO SALT

Learn how to give your horse just the right amount of salt. Salt is crucial, for muscle function, correct water intake, rehydration after work and colic prevention. Salt is needed for endurance, sweating and effective cooling. And it is needed for recovery after work. But, it is often difficult to know how much salt to feed. You might be feeding too much. Or not enough.

### IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

1. What is salt?
2. Why it is so hard to know how much salt to feed?
3. What happens if you feed too much salt?
4. The best way to give the right amount of salt.



01

## WHAT IS SALT?

Salt, as in ordinary ol' table salt is 'sodium chloride'. Sodium and chloride are two of the most important electrolyte minerals in a horse's diet. Salt is used in horse diets as a source of both of these nutrients.

02

## WHY IS IT HARD TO KNOW HOW MUCH SALT TO FEED?

The amount of salt you should feed is determined by your horse's sodium requirement AND the amount of sodium in his base diet.

Your horse's sodium requirement is affected by the climate he lives in and the amount of work he does. The hotter and more humid and the harder the work, the higher the sodium requirement. And vice versa.

The sodium content of his base diet can vary A LOT too. Some forages, like mine, can have 0% sodium, while others can have 0.5% sodium or more. If you feed a complete feed, these nearly always have salt added. If you use straights, fibres or oils, these usually don't have salt added. So the base diet also has a big influence on how much salt you need to add.

03

## WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU FEED TOO MUCH SALT?

Too much salt will stop your horse from eating. Salt is one ingredient that will affect the 'taste' of a diet. Too much salt makes a feed taste bad (we all know this from our own experience with food that was too salty!). And, if your horse has gastric ulcers, too much salt will cause pain when your horse eats. And both of these will reduce your horse's appetite. Not good.

Plus, studies have shown that feeds that are too salty can negatively affect your horse's gut bacteria. And that is something you want to avoid!

04

## GETTING SALT 'JUST RIGHT'

Here is how to get salt just right; using FeedXL, use salt to top up your horse's sodium requirement until it is sitting just on 100% of his daily requirement. THEN provide access to free choice, loose rock salt. Because the neat thing is, horses have an appetite for sodium. And they will eat salt when they need more sodium.

So giving him access to free choice salt means he can eat more salt if he needs more sodium. And if you want to get salt even more accurate, you should test your horse's pasture or hay, upload this in FeedXL and add salt according to the actual sodium content of his base diet.



# STEP 5: WATER

Nothing works without water! So you must maintain the highest standards in water quality.

## IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

1. The importance of water for your horse's health and wellbeing



“

*If your water is not  
clean enough for you  
to drink, it is not  
clean enough.*

PROFESSOR GEOFF HINCH

# 01

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER

Water. It may be something you haven't really spent much time thinking about. But, if your horse doesn't drink enough:

- 1. HE MIGHT LOSE WEIGHT.** If your horse is not drinking properly he won't be eating properly, and this can cause weight loss.
- 2. THE RISK OF COLIC INCREASES.** Dehydration due to low water intake can cause impaction colic.
- 3. DEHYDRATION WILL REDUCE PERFORMANCE.** Muscles that aren't well hydrated cannot function normally. And this will cause poor performance and early onset of fatigue.
- 4. RECOVERY WILL TAKE LONGER.** Muscles can only recover when they are well hydrated.

Here is the most important rule when it comes to water for your horses:

*“If your water is not clean enough for you to drink, it is not clean enough”*

Professor Geoff Hinch

So keep your water troughs and buckets clean!



Above: Dr. Nerida Richards  
FeedXL Founder.

FeedXL.com gives you, as a horse owner, a simple, unbiased tool that will help you take the worry out of feeding. You can create diets that will have your budget under control and your horse a glowing picture of health.

## **7 DAY TRIAL, 100% MONEY BACK**

**TRY FEEDXL FOR 7 DAYS. IF YOU DON'T LOVE IT, SIMPLY TELL US WHY NOT AND WE'LL REFUND 100% OF YOUR MONEY.**

You've got nothing to lose. Join us, and be a part of feeding horses Better. Safer. Smarter. Be a part of FeedXL.com

<https://feedxl.com/>