

What Is a Poor Doer Horse?

A **poor doer horse** is one that struggles to maintain **condition** even when it has access to a reasonable diet and adequate care. These horses may have a naturally fast metabolism, poor **digestibility**, a heavy workload, or they may simply use energy quickly. Some are easy to spot because they look thin, lack muscle, or have a low **body condition score**. Others slowly lose condition over time, which can be missed until **weight loss** becomes clear.

The first step is not to assume the answer is simply more **horse feed**. A poor doer often needs a smarter feeding plan, not just a bigger one. Start by assessing **forage intake**, teeth, worming status, workload, and whether the horse is getting enough calories from a **forage-based diet**. If a horse is eating plenty of hay or **haylage** but still losing weight, the issue may be the nutritional value of the forage, the horse's ability to use it efficiently, or the need for extra energy from other sources.

Body condition should be checked consistently, ideally using a simple scoring system. This helps you spot subtle changes before they become serious. A poor doer may need a tailored ration that improves **energy** intake without overloading the **digestive system**. That is why the best feeding plans focus on fibre, digestibility, and steady intake rather than large hard-feed meals.

How to Select the Most Suitable Horse Feed for Hard Keepers

Choosing the most suitable **horse feed** for a thin horse means tailoring the feed to the horse's condition score, activity level, age, eating habits, and digestive resilience. The goal is usually **weight gain** or improved maintenance, but the path there matters. A sensible diet should provide enough **calories**, support **gut health**, and remain palatable enough that the horse eats consistently.

A **complete horse feed** can be useful if you want ease and a balanced ration in one product. These feeds are designed to supply energy, **protein**, **vitamins**, and **minerals** together, though the quality and composition change between **horse feed companies**. Some complete feeds are higher in fibre and lower in starch, while others are more cereal-based. For poor doers, lower-starch options are often more manageable to feed because they can support condition without excessive excitability or digestive upset.

When comparing **types of horse feed**, think about where the calories come from. Energy can come from fibre, starch, or **oil**. Fibre- and oil-based rations are often better tolerated for horses that need gradual condition improvement. A cereal-rich feed may suit some performance horses, but it is not always the best choice for a horse that struggles with weight, especially if it has a sensitive digestive system.

Good **horse feed advice uk** focuses on the horse in front of you rather than a one-size-fits-all product. Use labels to compare ingredient quality, starch content, fibre levels, and feeding rates. Also look at the practical side: how much you need to feed, how easy it is to source, and whether the feed works well with the rest of the ration.

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Low-Starch Options and Conditioners

A **high-fibre feed** is often one of the strongest starting points for a poor doer because fibre supports even energy release and usually fits well into a natural grazing pattern. Horses are built to eat fibre throughout the

day, so this approach supports **digestible fibre** intake and helps keep the gut working properly. For many poor doers, more fibre means better intake, better comfort, and better chance of gradual condition improvement.

A **conditioning feed** is usually higher in calories than a maintenance feed and is designed to help horses add condition. The best ones offer good **calorie density** without relying heavily on starch. That renders them valuable for horses that need more energy but cannot cope with a large cereal load. Conditioners can be especially helpful when forage alone is not enough, or when the horse needs extra support during colder months, hard work, or recovery.

Look for feeds that blend digestible fibre with a sensible amount of oil and balanced nutrients. This combination can improve palatability and help the horse eat enough to meet its requirements. If the horse is picky, the texture and smell of the feed matter too. Poor doers often need a ration they will readily finish every day.

When to Use a Balancer, Cube, or Mix

A **feed balancer** is a concentrated supplement designed to deliver key nutrients in a small amount of feed. It is useful when you want to improve nutrition without adding much bulk or extra starch. For a horse that already has excellent forage intake but still needs a nutritional top-up, a balancer can be an effective option. It is not always a high-calorie solution on its own, but it can support condition when paired with good forage and the right base feed.

A cube may be a practical middle ground. Some cubes are designed as a complete or near-complete ration, while others are more of a conditioning feed. A **horse feed mix recipe** can sometimes be useful for owners who want to build a custom ration, but it should be approached carefully. Balancing energy, fibre, minerals, and starch takes planning. A homemade mix that looks generous may still miss key nutrients or create an unhelpful starch load.

Many **horse feed companies** offer feeds aimed at **horse feed for beginners**, which is often a good place to start if you are not confident adjusting rations. These feeds usually give clearer feeding instructions, making it easier to build a consistent plan. Simpler is often safer, especially when you are learning how to manage a poor doer.

10 Guidelines of Feeding Horses That Apply to Hard Keepers

Clear **horse feeding rules** matter all the more for hard keepers because these horses are often being managed near the limit of what their body can comfortably handle. Applying the **10 rules of feeding horses** supports health while enhancing condition.

- Use forage as the base of the ration.
- Use **ad lib forage** when appropriate if the horse can maintain a healthy weight on it safely.
- Offer **small frequent meals** rather than heavy hard-feed servings.
- Avoid sudden changes in ration.
- Select feed with suitable digestibility for the horse's **digestive system**.
- Adjust calories to work, climate, and body condition.
- Watch **starch** intake carefully if the horse is sensitive.
- Add oil and fibre to raise energy where appropriate.
- Assess teeth, worm control, and health issues before increasing feed.
- Monitor condition regularly and adjust the ration gradually.

For poor doers, these rules are not optional extras. They help avoid upset, boost nutrient use, and support healthy weight gain. Feeding little and often also helps avoid overloading the gut, especially when the ration

includes more concentrated energy sources.

How Much Horse Feed Should a Poor Doer Have?

The correct quantity of feed depends on the horse's size, body condition, workload, forage quality, and metabolism. A useful starting point is a **horse feeding chart**, but this should always be adjusted for the individual horse. A **horse feed calculator uk** can also help work out a starting ration based on **horse body weight**, though it should be treated as a reference point, not a final answer.

The **daily feed** should reflect the energy level the horse gets from forage before any hard feed is added. Certain thin horses need only a modest amount of concentrated feed if the forage is high-quality and plentiful. Other horses may need a more calorie-dense ration, especially if they have lost weight, are working, or cannot eat enough forage in one day.

As a useful rule of thumb, increase feed slowly and observe the horse's condition, coat, droppings, energy, and appetite. If condition does not improve after a fair interval, re-evaluate the whole plan rather than simply adding more feed. Occasionally the problem is not quantity but quality, or an imbalance in the diet.

Using a Feeding Chart Safely

A feeding guide is best treated as a starting point, rather than a fixed rule. The most useful **feeding guide** should help you estimate a reasonable starting level using your horse's weight and exercise level, but it cannot know your horse's exact needs. If you use a **forage-to-concentrate ratio**, ensure forage remains the main part of the ration. This helps keep the diet closer to nature and usually supports better **digestive health**.

Pay close attention to **starch levels**. Excess starch may cause reduced digestive efficiency, increased sharpness, and a higher chance of digestive discomfort in sensitive horses. For many poor doers, it is wiser to raise calories with fibre and oil before increasing starch. This approach often improves condition more steadily and supports better gut function.

If you are in doubt, use the feeding chart as a guide and confirm that the horse is improving condition in the correct way. The goal is not just to feed more, but to feed more intelligently.

How Much Does Horse Feed Cost?

The **horse feed cost** for a poor doer depends on feed type, feeding rate, and how much forage you already provide. A denser feed may have a higher **cost per bag**, but it may also be more efficient if you feed less of it. That is why price alone is not a useful measure of **value for money**.

When comparing **horse feed companies**, look at what each bag actually delivers. A lower-cost feed may require a substantially higher feeding rate, while a premium balancer or conditioning feed may last longer and provide a more complete nutritional profile. Consider whether the product is a true complete feed, a top-up, or a specialist conditioning feed.

For a poor doer, the best value is often the feed that helps maintain condition consistently without causing waste, stress, or extra veterinary problems. The lowest-priced option is not always the best choice if the horse still fails to gain weight or needs multiple extra products to complete the ration.

Comparing Popular Horse Feed Brands

In comparing **horse feed companies**, look for straightforward feeding instructions, detailed ingredient lists, and a product range that includes both **complete horse feed** and **conditioning feed** options. Certain brands are known for broad ranges that suit different workloads and body types, while others specialise in fibre-based or low-starch nutrition.

Spillers horse feed is one of the better-known names in the market and offers products for a large range of horses, including those needing more condition. Like any brand, the right choice depends on the specific feed rather [check here](#) than the logo on the bag. A good comparison should consider calorie source, fibre content, starch, palatability, and how well the product fits the rest of the ration.

For poor doers, the most useful comparison points are whether the feed supports a healthy digestive system, whether it can be fed alongside forage, and whether it helps achieve gradual improvement without overloading the horse. A complete feed may suit one horse, while another may do better on a balancer plus a high-fibre conditioning ration.

Frequent Ration Mistakes That Can Leave Poor Doers Stronger

A common error is **giving too much feed** a poor feed choice. More is not always better, especially if the ration becomes high in starch or unbalanced in nutrients. Another common issue is a **sudden diet change**, which can disrupt the digestive system and reduce appetite. Thin horses need slow careful changes.

Colic risk can get higher if feed changes are sudden, forage is poor, or meals are overly big. Similarly, some horses are at greater risk of **laminitis** if the ration contains excess starch or too much sugar relative to their needs. This is why feed choice must be tailored closely to the individual horse, not just chosen for high energy alone.

Another mistake is ignoring forage quality. If forage intake is low, the horse may never get enough calories no matter how much hard feed is offered. In many cases, boosting forage access is the most crucial move before adding a more concentrated ration.

Practical Horse Feed Guidance for Beginners

For **horse feed for beginners**, the most sensible approach is to start with forage, then build a basic, well-rounded ration around it. Follow **horse feed advice uk** from respected nutrition sources, but always adjust it to the horse in front of you. A poor doer often responds well from a clear routine, regular monitoring, and a feed plan that is simple to keep consistent.

Focus on **forage** first. Fresh hay or haylage is the base of the ration, and the horse should have ample time and access to make proper use of it. Then choose a suitable hard feed, such as a high-fibre conditioner, complete feed, or balancer depending on how much extra energy and nutrients are needed.

Stable management also matters. Comfortable, dry shelter, reduced stress, regular turnout where appropriate, and consistent mealtimes all support appetite and condition. A horse that is anxious, cold, or uncomfortable will often struggle to use feed efficiently. Good management allows the feed work better.

Maintain a simple record of what the horse eats, how much is offered, and how the body condition score changes over time. That makes it much easier to notice what is effective and what is not.

Frequently Asked Questions About Feeding and Care for Poor Doers

Which is the best horse feed for poor doers?

The best **horse feed** for poor doers is usually a high-fibre, calorie-dense option that supports steady condition gain without too much starch. In many cases, a good quality **conditioning feed**, a complete feed, or a feed balancer paired with plenty of forage works well. The best choice depends on the horse's appetite, workload, and digestive tolerance.

How much horse feed should a poor doer get each day?

The amount depends on the horse's **horse body weight**, body condition, work level, and how much good forage it already receives. A **horse feeding chart** or **horse feed calculator uk** can give a starting point, but the final **daily ration** should be adjusted based on condition, appetite, and digestive response.

Is a complete horse feed enough for a poor doer?

A **complete horse feed** can be adequate for some hard keepers, especially if it is calorie-dense and combined with good forage. However, others may need additional forage, a balancer, or a more suitable conditioning feed. The key is whether the full feed plan supplies enough calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals without too much starch.

How do I use a horse feeding chart safely?

Use a **horse feeding chart** as a guide only, and make sure it fits the horse's actual condition and workload. Check the **forage-to-concentrate ratio**, keep an eye on **starch levels**, and raise feed gradually. Safe use of a chart means maintaining **digestive health**, not just chasing a number on the page.

How much does horse feed cost per month for a poor doer?

Horse feed cost varies depending on the feed chosen, the **cost per bag**, and how much is fed each day. A more concentrated product may seem more expensive but can offer better **value for money** if less is needed. The total monthly cost also depends on forage quality and whether extra supplements are required.