

What should you consider when selecting horse feed in 2026?

Picking the right horse feed in 2026 starts with the horse, not the bag. The most suitable option depends on horse nutrition, bodyweight, workload, age, temperament, and metabolic health. A horse that is idle in light work has very different energy requirements from a performance horse, and a good-doer needs a different feeding regime from an underweight horse.

The most important principle is forage first. Forage such as hay and haylage should form the foundation of a balanced diet because it supports gut health, provides quality fibre, and helps maintain a steady digestive process. Concentrated horse feed should then be used only to fill gaps in digestibility, digestible energy, protein, vitamin and mineral intake, or to support condition score.

Always check the sugar and starch level, especially if your horse is prone to laminitis or other metabolic concerns. Lower-starch feeds are often better for horses that need slow release energy rather than a quick burst. A sensible ration is one that matches workload and condition, not one that simply looks “strong” or “complete”.

If you want practical horse feed advice uk owners can trust, start with these basics:

- Check bodyweight and condition score regularly.
- Base the diet on forage such as hay or haylage.
- Use horse feed to balance deficiencies, not to replace forage.
- Align digestible energy to workload.
- Review fibre, protein, starch, and overall digestibility together.

Horse feeding rules matter because a feed that suits one horse can be unsuitable for another. The “best” horse feed is the one that supports a healthy balanced diet, works with the feeding regime you can maintain, and keeps the horse comfortable, calm, and well-conditioned.

What are the main varieties of horse feed?

There are several categories of horse feed, and each has a separate function within horse nutrition. Learning the main categories makes it easier to pick a ration that is appropriate for the horse’s bodyweight, workload, and health status.

Forage is the foundation. Hay and haylage are the main forage options, and both provide fibre that helps maintain gut health and steady digestion. Quality forage is often the most important element of the diet, especially for horses in light work or those that need a forage-first approach.

Oats are a traditional cereal feed and provide quick energy, but they can be high in starch and are not ideal for every horse. They may suit some horses in hard work, but they are not automatically the best choice for a horse with laminitis risk or sensitive digestion.

Pellets are compact feeds that can be easier to measure and usually reduce sorting. They may contain a blend of fibre, cereals, added vitamins, minerals, and sometimes a supplement package.

Cubes are similar in purpose to pellets, though the physical form is different. Some horses chew cubes more slowly, which can be helpful for digestibility and calmer feeding.

Balancers are concentrated feeds designed to supply vitamin and mineral intake, amino acids, and other nutrients without adding lots of calories. They are often useful when forage is good quality but the horse does

not need much extra digestible energy.

Complete horse feed aims to provide both fibre and concentrated nutrients in one product. It is designed to be fed in smaller amounts than traditional mixes, though “complete” does not mean every horse needs it.

A **horse feed mix recipe** may refer to a custom ration built from forage, a base feed, oats, pellets, balancer, or other ingredients. Homemade mixing can work, but it requires careful attention to horse feeding rules, nutrient balance, and consistent measurement. A poorly designed mix can disrupt the balanced diet and lead to excess sugar and starch or nutritional gaps.

Different horse feed manufacturers develop feeds with different objectives. Some specialize on weight gain, some on work performance, others on roughage, and some on digestion support. This is why it helps to read the label rather than relying on broad claims.

Is complete horse feed the right choice for most horses?

A complete horse feed can be a highly practical option, but it is not automatically the best option for many horses. The main benefit is simplicity: it combines multiple nutrients into one ration, often with fiber, calories, protein, and vitamins and minerals already included. This can streamline feeding and help owners avoid complicated mixing.

For horses in moderate work, a complete horse feed may provide a reasonable mix of digestible energy and fiber. It can also be helpful where consistent intake matters and where the owner wants a straightforward feeding regime. For a horse with only modest energy requirements, a complete product may be easier to manage than a traditional cereal-based mix.

However, a complete horse feed is not always the solution. A thrifty horse may not need the calories, while a horse with laminitis risk may need closer control of sugar and starch. An underweight horse may need a more targeted ration with extra digestible energy and perhaps more fat, fibre, or protein depending on the reason of weight loss.

A horse feeding chart can help you decide how much to offer, but it should be treated as a reference rather than a fixed rule. If the feed is highly concentrated, the horse may need much less than the standard amount. If the forage is poor quality, you may need to modify the ration to keep the diet properly balanced.

The key point is not “Is complete horse feed best?” but “Does this complete horse feed meet this horse’s level of work, bodyweight, and digestive needs?” If the answer is yes, it can be a strong option. If the answer is no, a more individualised approach is better.

How much does horse feed cost in 2026?

Horse feed pricing in 2026 depends on feed type, quality, and how much your horse really requires each day. A horse may seem expensive to feed simply because owners compare bag prices rather than cost per day. The more useful question is: how much does horse feed cost per month for this specific horse?

Premium forage, such as hay and haylage, is a major part of the spend. Concentrated feeds vary widely in price, especially when comparing pellets, cubes, balancer products, and complete horse feed. Some horse feed companies market premium formulas with added gut health support or lower sugar and starch levels, which can raise the cost but may also reduce the quantity needed.

The most efficient way to estimate horse feed cost is to calculate daily use based on bodyweight and workload, then multiply it across the month. A horse feed calculator uk tool can help estimate ration size, though you still

need to consider forage quality and the horse's condition score. A calculator cannot fully replace observation.

When comparing feeds, look at daily cost, not just cost per bag. A cheaper feed can become expensive if the horse needs more of it, while a more concentrated feed may work out better value if it delivers the right digestible energy and vitamin and mineral intake in smaller amounts.

It also helps to compare what is included. A feed that already contains roughage, protein, and micronutrients may remove the need for an extra supplement. That can reduce total horse feed cost even if the bag price seems higher.

How do horse feeding rules and charts help you get feeding right?

Horse-feeding guidelines and a ration chart are valuable because they turn trial and error into structure. A chart can show rough daily amounts based on body weight, exercise level, and the feed type, while the rules help you use practical checks to keep the ration safe and effective.

The classic **10 rules of feeding horses** are usually rooted in the same basic ideas: offer forage before concentrates, make diet changes slowly, measure feeds carefully, ensure clean water is available, avoid abrupt starch overload, and monitor body condition. These rules help prevent stomach problems, poor condition, and issues linked to overfeeding or insufficient feeding.

A ration chart is especially important when you are comparing roughage and compound feed, because it can show whether the horse is receiving enough fibre and digestible energy without overloading sugar and starch. If a chart suggests a ration that does not match the horse's current condition score, revise it cautiously rather than taking it at face value.

A horse feed calculator uk tool can support this process by estimating approximate amounts based on weight and exercise level. Used well, it can help owners put together a more accurate ration and reduce the risk of feeding too little or overfeeding. It is most useful when paired with practical assessment of the horse's condition, coat, energy level, and appetite.

Feeding charts and rules and rules do not replace judgement, but they do help you keep the feeding regime consistent. Consistency matters because horses do best with predictable intake, slow changes, and a ration that supports digestive health.

Which horse feed is the best choice for new owners?

For horse feed for beginners, the safest starting point is usually a minimalist, forage-focused approach. Many novice owners worry that they need an elaborate mix, but in practice the best horse feed for a beginner is often the one that is simplest to manage correctly and least likely to upset the horse's digestion.

If the horse is in light work or maintaining condition well, a basic forage-first plan with hay or haylage and a straightforward balancer may be all that is needed. This helps maintain vitamin and mineral intake without adding extra calories. If the horse needs more support, a complete horse feed can be a new-owner-friendly option because it minimizes the need to build a complex ration from scratch.

Horse feed advice uk owners often hear includes the same main message: begin with basics, measure accurately, and make changes slowly. Beginners should avoid mixing several cereals and supplements without understanding how they affect energy levels, fibre, protein, and starch.

A good beginner feed should: [overweight horse feed](#)

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- Support a balanced diet without being fussy.
- Be appropriate for the horse's workload and bodyweight.
- Be simple to measure and adjust.
- Help maintain condition score and steady energy.
- Fit with a careful feeding regime based on forage-first principles.

If you are unsure, choose a feed that is clearly marked, relatively low in starch, and suitable for the horse's current needs. A simple approach is often better than trying to solve everything with one powerful feed.

How do you evaluate horse feed companies and names?

When evaluating horse feed companies, focus on recipe rather than marketing. Brand reputation is important, but the nutritional profile matters far more. Even well-known names such as **spillers horse feed** should be assessed in the same way as any other manufacturer: check what the feed is designed to do, and whether that meets your horse's needs.

Start by comparing the type of feed, the calorie level, the fibre content, and the amount of sugar and starch. Consider whether it is a complete horse feed, a balancer, a high-fibre mix, or a cereal-based option. A feed with more digestible energy is not automatically better if the horse is a good-doer or has metabolic health concerns.

Look at how each company presents the intended use. Some horse feed companies focus on performance, others on weight gain, and others on digestive support. The best company for you is the one whose products fit with your feeding regime, condition score targets, and budget.

Horse feed cost also matters here. A premium brand may be justified if it allows you to feed less or avoid extra supplementation, but a lower-cost product may be sufficient if the horse's forage is already good and the workload is light. The key is true value, not just price.

If you are comparing brands for an underweight horse, a performance horse, or a horse with laminitis risk, think in terms of function. The best product is the one that supports horse nutrition safely and consistently.

Can you use a horse feed calculator or feeding chart?

Absolutely, and for many horses you should. A horse feed calculator uk tool and a horse feeding chart are useful planning tools because they turn general advice into a first ration. They can estimate amounts based on bodyweight, workload, and feed type, which makes it easier to create a balanced feeding regime.

Even so, these tools are only as good as the information you put in. If the horse's forage intake is unknown, or if the horse is gaining or losing condition quickly, the result may need adjustment. A calculator cannot see the horse's actual condition score, coat quality, or level of exercise tolerance.

Use a feeding chart to inform your initial ration, then check the horse weekly. Ask whether the horse is maintaining bodyweight, whether energy levels are appropriate, and whether the diet supports gut health. If the horse is becoming sharp, sluggish, or losing shape, adjust the ration rather than simply adding more horse feed.

A horse feed calculator uk can be especially useful when comparing complete rations, balancers, pellets, cubes, and other feed types because it helps estimate total daily intake. Alongside a feeding chart, it can reduce overfeeding and improve accuracy.

The most reliable approach is to use the tools for planning, then refine the ration with real-world observation and good horse feed advice uk.

What mistakes should horse owners avoid when feeding horses?

The most common feeding mistakes usually come from ignoring horse feeding rules or misunderstanding the role of different types of horse feed. A horse may look like it needs “more feed” when the real issue is poor forage quality, an unsuitable ration, or inconsistent intake.

One frequent mistake is relying too heavily on cereal-based feeds such as oats without considering starch load. While oats can be useful in some rations, they are not suitable for every horse and can be problematic where laminitis risk or metabolic health is a concern.

Another error is not putting first forage. Hay and haylage should usually be the main part of the diet, with concentrates used only as needed. If a horse is getting excessive concentrated horse feed and not enough fibre, gut health may be affected.

Other issues include:

- Changing feed too fast rather than step by step.
- Overlooking condition score and bodyweight changes.
- Using multiple supplements when one complete horse feed or balancer would do.
- Ignoring the sugar and starch content of the ration.
- Using a horse feeding chart without checking the horse in front of you.

Good horse nutrition is about getting it right, not volume. A carefully chosen ration should cover energy requirements, support digestibility, and match the horse’s workload without overloading the digestive system.

FAQ: common horse feed questions in 2026

What horse feed is best for horses in 2026?

The best horse feed in 2026 depends on the horse’s bodyweight, workload, age, and health. For many horses, a forage-first diet with hay or haylage, plus a suitable balancer or complete horse feed if needed, is a strong choice. Horses with laminitis risk or metabolic health concerns often do better on lower sugar and starch options, while performance horses may need more digestible [grain free feed UK](#) energy and slow release energy support.

Is complete horse feed suitable for all horses?

No, complete horse feed is not suitable for all horses. It can be a good option for many horses because it is convenient and often nutritionally balanced, but some horses need fewer calories, lower starch, or a more tailored ration. Good-doers, underweight horses, and horses with specific digestive or metabolic issues may need a different approach.

How much does horse feed cost per month?

Horse feed cost per month varies depending on the horse's size, workload, forage quality, and the type of feed used. The best way to estimate it is to work out the daily ration using a horse feed calculator uk or a feeding chart, then multiply by the number of days in the month. Remember to include forage, not just concentrate feed, when budgeting.

What exactly are the 10 rules of feeding horses?

The 10 rules of feeding horses generally cover feeding forage first, providing clean water, making diet changes gradually, measuring accurately, avoiding sudden large starch meals, monitoring body condition, matching feed to workload, maintaining regular feeding times, keeping feed fresh, and checking the horse's response to the ration. These feeding rules for horses help maintain gut health and a stable balanced diet.

How can I select horse feed for beginners?

For horse feed for beginners, pick something simple, clearly labelled, and appropriate for the horse's workload. A forage-first diet with hay or haylage, plus a balancer or complete horse feed if needed, can be easier to manage than a complicated mix. Good horse feed advice uk usually recommends starting simple, making changes slowly, and checking bodyweight and condition score regularly.