



WE WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY

To all of our loyal customers we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your continued support throughout the year. We hope that 2022 is filled with much success and we look forward to joining you every step of the way.

Feeding through the holidays

The December holidays are finally upon us and for many that means a well-deserved break for both horse and rider, however for some it means more time to ride and so workload increases.

Assessing your horse's diet prior to making changes will ensure that all the essential nutrients are fully covered to maintain overall health this holiday.

Increased workload for a few weeks

If you are going to be riding a lot more its likely your horse will need additional feed during this time. All horses should receive at least 1.5% of body weight per day of forage (hay, grazing, hay cubes etc.) This could be increased to 2% should your horse be working harder, or you could look at changing a portion of his forage to a higher calorie forage such a Lucerne or a high fibre cube to add extra calories without increasing the amount of forage fed.

For those not on a concentrate it may be worth adding in a balancer, although this won't give additional energy/calories it will ensure your horse receives all the essential vitamins and minerals it needs when moving up a workload level. For those receiving a concentrate all that's likely to be needed is a small increase in the amount fed, alongside their normal daily portion of forage.

Time off One day - 1 week

For this length of time off there is no need to reduce or change the

horse's feed, especially if the horse's rest period can include some level of activity such as lunging, use of a horse walker and/or extra turnout time.

However, if an individual is prone to weight gain or excitability then reducing the horse' concentrate feed slightly may be worthwhile. For example a reduction of 15-20%, which is around 500g-700g for a horse on 3.5kg per day, may be all that's needed.

Two - four weeks

As it is still a relatively short time off, and changes should always be done gradually, it may not be worthwhile changing to a different product (especially if the current diet works well), so the safest option would be to simply reduce the amount of concentrate feed.

For this length of time off or for cases where the horse is being fed a concentrate that is higher in cereal grains, the reduction may need to be around 30-50%. This will lower the starch and sugar content of the diet to minimise excitability and the risk of the horse becoming "tied-up" as well as reducing digestive upsets. This risk is further reduced if the horse gets a good amount of paddock time on his rest days and of course adequate forage per day. When cutting back by this larger amount it may be worthwhile adding in a good quality balancer to ensure that the horse still gets all the nutrients it requires.

If the horse is not only excitable but also struggles to maintain weight, then reducing the concentrate portion while increasing the



roughage portion (this could be made up of hay, grazing, chaff, hay cubes, beet products) maybe an ideal way to go as it ensures your horse gets the calories required without the fizz.

If the horse is not in a high level of work and therefore doesn't get much concentrate feed the need to reduce may not be as great, in fact your ability to reduce anything will be fairly limited and balance can be happily maintained by reducing the daily concentrate intake by only 20-30%.

Reducing feed does not necessarily mean cutting out meals, and some horses can become quite upset if they start to miss out on meals. So, if feed is normally given 3 times per day continue to do so with less food per meal.

What happens if I run out of feed?

Honestly, it's not such a huge deal. Yes, disrupting the horse's routine and dietary plan is never ideal but the horse isn't going to be too concerned if hay is provided.

Often, we obsess about what's going in the bucket but forget that the horse's diet shouldn't be made up of concentrate feed alone but rather should be made up of forage (hay and grazing) with

concentrate provided to make up for any nutrient levels not supplied by his forage. If the horse is going to miss out on a meal or two then simply ensure he has ad lib access to hay 24/7 and even consider adding some of this hay to his "bucket" along with any extras like supplements, carrots etc, so that he is fed at normal time under similar situations, this will help to reduce stress associated with a change in routine.

If your horse is already getting ad lib hay then perhaps he can have some extra time in the paddock also ensure he can eat as much grass as he likes before coming into his stable, or maybe (if the horse is happy and used to being out) he could stay out 24/7 in his paddock to allow him to graze constantly.

We all know that sudden changes to a horse's diet is often not a good idea and so if your horse is only going to miss a meal or two it's not worth changing feed as it takes the horse's digestive system 7-10 days to adapt to something new in the diet, and so sudden swaps in feed could put the horse at risk of digestive upset.

If feed will be in short/no supply for several weeks then yes it may be wise to start something new, however take time and introduce this new feed slowly over the 7 – 10 days needed to adapt.

