



## Drought Feeding Recommendations for Equine

*Don't wait start planning now.*

Horse requires 1.5-3.5% of body weight in feed and ideally 1.5% should be in forage. A diet providing forage at 1.5-2% of body weight with minimal grain intake is the healthiest way to feed a horse. That means a 1,000 lb horse will eat between 15-20 lb or more of hay or pasture on a dry matter basis or one small bale of hay every two to three days assuming a bale weighs 40-60 lb. Feeding forage may be very expensive if there is a shortage of hay, especially during wide-spread drought conditions.

Horses as forage animals need a chewable fiber source. Ideally, fiber particle size should be at least two inches to activate digestive activity in the intestine. At least 50% of the forage should be provided as long-stem forage, such as hay. Additional forage needs can be supplied by other forage sources like Forage First® Hay Extender, Forage First Hay Cubes, soy hulls, beet pulp, other sources of hay cubes or pellets, or complete feeds high in crude fiber like Patriot® Senior Complete or Patriot Feed Easy® Complete. Feeding sufficient forage will help keep horses content and helps deter digestive disorders such as colic.

Alfalfa plants are more drought resistant so don't discount using alfalfa if available. However, the amount of grain may need to be decreased when using alfalfa. A word of caution: some insulin resistant horses cannot tolerate high-quality, nutrient-rich alfalfa hay. Consequently, when feeding alfalfa to these horses one may need to feed it only once a day and a lower quality hay at the next feeding. Using slow feed hay feeders or nets can also decrease waste and consumption which will stretch hay supply while still providing 24/7 access to forages.

Avoid feeding moldy or dusty hay as molds can cause colic and dusty hay can lead to respiratory problems. Hay over a year old is okay as long as it is clean, dry and mold free. Vitamin content of hay diminishes during storage after a period of time; consequently, it is recommended that horses be provided with a good mineral/vitamin supplement like GROSTRONG® Minerals fed at 3 oz per day for a 1,000 lb horse or StaySTRONG™ 33 Ration Balancer fed at 0.5-2 lb per horse daily top-dressed or incorporated into the grain mix. ADM Animal Nutrition's GLO for Life<sup>SM</sup> premium equine feeds and Patriot Performance Feeds provide protein, fat, digestible fiber, minerals, and vitamins. These types of feeds are fed twice daily and should never exceed 0.5% of a horse's body weight per feeding. For a 1,000 lb horse the feeding rate should not exceed 5 lb per feeding. Complete feeds like Patriot Senior Complete or Patriot Feed Easy Complete are high-fiber type feeds that utilize soy hulls, wheat midds, dehydrated alfalfa, and/or beet pulp as digestible fiber sources. Patriot Senior Complete and Patriot Feed Easy Complete feeds can replace most or a portion of the forages in the diet and are fed at 16-20 lb per horse daily and should be introduced gradually.

When a drought is forecasted, plan your horse's forage needs by inventorying your current supply and determining future needs. Take action to ensure that you will have ample forage to meet your horse's need over the next several months and to avoid the increase in forage cost that occurs as supply diminishes. If you need assistance with putting together a ration or strategies for feeding during a drought, call the Equine HELPLINE at 800-680-8254.