



# How to feed your senior horse

As horses age, they often need a bit of extra TLC, so that they can stay happy and healthy for as long as possible. Here are some pointers to help...

## Keeping weight on

Keeping weight, condition and muscle mass on senior horses is a common challenge for owners. Weight loss can be due to a whole host of reasons, so if your beloved oldie is a little on the skinny side, it's important that you work out why.

There are **lots of causes of weight loss in older horses** including a generally lower feed intake that can come with age, a change in herd dynamics, high worm burden, scarring of the intestines from parasites, insufficient nutrient intake, osteoarthritis or pain in the forelimbs or neck, poor dentition or other underlying disease. That's why working out WHY your older horse is losing weight before you try to fix it, is so important!

You might need to **enlist the help of your vet** to figure out the cause and then you can make changes to the diet accordingly.

## Check their teeth

**The state of your horse's teeth can have a huge impact on their weight.** Older horses are more prone to dental disease, enamel can wear off and teeth often need to be removed. It's no fun trying to chew food with a sore mouth and it can affect your horse's ability to grind their feed and break it down efficiently for digestion.

**Dental checks every 6 - 12 months are a good idea.** From here, your vet can recommend whether changes need to be made to the diet.

**TIP:** Signs of poor dentition include: quidding of feed, long fibrous material in manure, weight loss, choke, and colic.



## What should my older horse eat?

For otherwise healthy older horses (ie. who aren't suffering from a chronic disease such as Cushings' (PPID) or Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)), **a diet based on forage and fibre** is your best bet. Most older horses will also need something extra (like a fortified 'hard' feed) to help them maintain or gain weight.

When choosing a 'hard' feed, this is what to look for...

1. **Digestible energy sources: Extruded grains and oil are great** for helping to nourish healthy senior horses because they provide concentrated energy in a form that is also very digestible. Extruded grains such as rice, and oil-rich ingredients such as rice bran and linseed can **help promote weight gain**.
2. **Quality protein:** Feeds that are rich in **essential amino acids are important to support muscle maintenance** in ALL horses - including aging horses. Good sources of quality protein include **soybean meal and rice bran**.
3. **Omega 3 and 6 oils:** Ingredients that are rich in Omega 3 and 6 oils may help **reduce inflammatory responses and maintain joints**. The oils in rice bran and linseed contain useful amounts of Omega 3 and 6 oils.

## Diets for horses with worn out teeth

If your vet has done all they can to help your senior horse's teeth, but the reality is that your horse has some missing or worn-out teeth, don't despair. You can still help manage their weight with appropriate feeds.

### A diet for a horse with Mild dental problems



#### FORAGE

Supply 1.5-2% of their body weight per day in forage.

(This is 7.5 - 10kg forage/day for a 500kg horse). Allow free access to pasture and supply long-stem fibre such as good quality mixed grass and lucerne hay.

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#### FORTIFIED 'HARD' FEED

Feed a fortified 'hard' feed designed for senior horses (eg. CopRice Veteran) at the recommended rate.

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#### SALT

Allow constant access to a salt lick.

### A diet for a horse with Moderate to severe dental problems



#### FORAGE

Supply 1.5-2% of their body weight per day in forage.

(This is 7.5 - 10kg forage/day for a 500kg horse). Allow free access to pasture and provide extra fibre in the form of hay cubes and chaff because these may be easier to eat.

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#### FORTIFIED 'HARD' FEED

Feed a fortified 'hard' feed designed for senior horses (eg. CopRice Veteran) at the recommended rate.

Ensure this can be soaked into a mash so your horse can eat it easily.

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#### SALT

Allow constant access to a salt lick.



Extruded for superior digestion.

Packed with high quality protein.

Can be soaked to form a soft mash.

Made in rural Australia using Australian-grown rice.

CopRice - nutrition that stacks up for them and works for you.

Got questions? Need help designing a diet? We'd love to help! Give us a call on 1800 029 901.