

Nutrition Myth busters



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helping horses for life

The following are examples of nutrition myths (with many pertaining to the autumn season):

Autumn grass is an adequate nutrition source on its own

It may look abundant and your horse may still be happily grazing but fall grass is typically higher in fibre and lower in nutrition. Your horse may begin to shed pounds on this pasture as a sole source of food; even though it had been able to maintain a healthy weight during the spring and summer months. Also be aware that fructan levels can increase with the return of moisture and this sugar can trigger laminitis. Your nutrition plan not only needs to consider workload but also changes in nutritional content of pasture or hay throughout the seasons.



Water tubs don't need to be scrubbed and topped up as often in cooler weather

Algae continue to flourish well into the fall season. Now is not the time to become lax with the scrub brush.

Keep the water topped up! As horses start eating more dry hay and less moisture rich grass, water is vital in digestion and keeps this dry matter moving smoothly through the gastro intestinal system.

I can stop providing salt now that the summer's heat has gone

Not true: horses need salt all year long to regulate fluids. Heat and humidity increase the need and feeding salt will help replace what is lost in perspiration. Feeding salt in cooler temperatures also promotes water consumption to prevent dehydration.

I should quickly fatten up my horse now before winter

It is important horses come into the winter with enough condition. It is harder to put weight on a horse lacking condition when it is using calories to stay warm BUT MAKE ANY CHANGES TO THE HORSE'S DIET GRADUALLY over 2 -3 weeks to avoid disturbing the bacterial population in the hind gut. In some cases, increasing hay intake may be enough. Fermentation of hay in the hind gut contributes to keeping the horse warm as temperatures drop.

Hay Cubes can't be used as a complete forage source

Hay cubes have shown promise as a forage extender or in some circumstances a replacement. They are particularly useful as a low dust feed for horses with respiratory conditions and for senior equines with dental challenges. Members of the OEF may be interested in an [exclusive offer](#) on hay cubes.

For more information on nutrition for horses in all seasons register for Equine Guelph's next [Equine Nutrition](#) online course.