

How to transition feedstuff in your horse's diet



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When transitioning your horse to new feedstuff – either to a new batch of hay, new pasture or new concentrates – you need to do so slowly to give bacteria in the horse's digestive tract a chance to adapt to the new feedstuff.

Bacterial populations change according to what the horse is eating, and time is required for different bacterial species to colonize in this new environment. If there is not enough time for the population to adapt, it can cause digestive disturbances which can lead to colic.

Using an adaptation period of 10-14 days to transition new feeds into your horse's diet is recommended.

Here is an example of an adaptation period:

	Day 1-3	Day 4-6	Day 7-10
Old Hay	75%	50%	25%
New Hay	25%	50%	75%

Forage makes up the largest portion of the horse's diet and using an adaptation period is of utmost importance when introducing a new forage source to your horse's diet. A change in hay/pasture has been associated with the highest risk of colic (*Hillyer et al., 2002*).

Change in Forage <i>(change in pasture, new batch of hay)</i>	Colic Risk
No change in forage	1.0x
Change 1-7 days ago	22.03x
Change 8-14 days ago	4.88x
Change 15-28 days ago	2.0x

References:

Hillyer, M. H., F. G. R. Taylor, C.J. Proudman, G.B Edwards, J.E. Smith and N. P. French. 2002. "Case control study to identify risk factors for simple colonic obstruction and distension colic in horses." *Equine Veterinary Journal* 34 (5): 455-463.