

Feeds

(Continued from Page E6)

in protein, energy, vitamins and calcium.

Hay can be long-stemmed in hay bales, or come bagged in cubes, or pellets. Many horse owners feed grass hay or straight alfalfa or a combination of grass and alfalfa to their horses. Grasses commonly used as hay are brome, orchard, and timothy.

Long stem hay is the traditional baled hay. It is cut, cured, and baled. It can be banded in 50- to 80-pound square bales or large, round or long square bales that can weigh tons.

Hay cubes are about an inch wide and 1- to 3-inches long. Hay pellets are ground hay compressed into two inch by 1/2 inch pellets.

Horses need good quality hay. It should be bright green, leafy and fine textured, with a fresh, pleasant aroma. Musty hay, or other indications of mold or heating, and dust, weeds and other foreign material in hay can be unhealthy for an animal.

Color is an indicator of quality and nutrient content; good hay is a bright green. Most nutrients in hay are in the leaves, and leafy hay is a valuable source of food.

Leafiness is influenced by the kind of hay, its maturity when cut, the weather conditions while growing and curing the hay, and curing procedures of the hay.

Dust is objectionable in any feed for horses. It not only reduces the taste of the hay, it also aggravates respiratory problems. Sprinkling or dunking dusty hay in water can reduce dust. Avoid feeding moldy or dusty hay. In the field, heavy rain can break off drying hay leaves and leaches energy and protein from the hay.

Hay baled before it is dry enough will lose nutrients through fermentation, or heating in the bale. This sometimes starts fires through spontaneous combustion in barnyard stacks of stored, baled hay. This type of hay is unacceptable for horses.

Good pasture or grass that an animal can graze can be an economical food for horses, but pasture must be maintained. If animals are allowed to graze on a pasture too long, the grass may be killed.

Well-managed pastures reduce feed costs and provide energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to animals. An exercise lot with a few blades of grass is not a pasture; such a lot, or overgrazed pasture, is not a source of nutrients and can be a serious source of internal parasites. When a grass stand becomes too thin, overgrown, coarse or unappetizing to a horse, it should be clipped or mowed.

Lush pasture forages can act as a laxative in early spring and may cause founder. Introduce horses gradually to pastures by slowly increasing their daily grazing time.

Concentrates
Small grains, such as corn, oats and barley, are known as concentrates. Concentrates are lower in fiber and higher in energy than roughages.

The grain should be clean, mold- and insect-free, with a bright color. Grain quality is just as important as hay quality. Grains may be cracked, steamed or rolled, but, if ground too finely, may cause respiratory problems or colic.

Oats are the safest and easiest grain to feed with hay because it is high in fiber and low in energy, and higher in protein than corn.

Corn has the highest energy content of any grain and can put weight on a horse quickly. It can be fed on the ear, cracked, rolled or shelled.

Barley is an intermediate source of energy and protein content. All grains are low in calcium, but high in phosphorus.

Supplements
Protein and vitamin-mineral supplements are added to the diet to increase the diet's concentration. Grains are energy supplements to a high forage diet.

Only add supplements to the diet if something is missing. Some protein supplements are oilseed meals, soybeans, cottonseed, linseed (flaxseed) meal, peanut meal, sunflower seed meal and rapeseed (canola). Vitamin and mineral supplements should only be added to the diet if the horse is deficient.

Generally, the only minerals of concern in feeding horses are calcium, phosphorus and salt.

In some geographical areas, lack of selenium and, in growing horses, copper and zinc, is a concern. Other minerals are likely to be present in adequate amounts in a normal diet.

Commercial grain mixes or complete feeds concentrated mixes are cereal grains with supplements added to increase the specific nutrient content of the mix. A complete feed is a grain mix that is high in fiber because it contains a forage or high-fiber byproducts feed such as hulls.

Complete feeds are held together, usually by extrusion (puffed up like dog food) or by forming into pellets. If you are feeding a commercial complete feed, you will not need to feed hay (follow the label for feeding recommendations). There are also feeds for specific classes of horses.

Some feeds are specially formulated for young, growing horses (weanlings and yearlings); and for geriatric (aged) horses that are old and have specific nutritional needs. Some commercial feed companies make premixed, convenient, easy-to-use formulated feeds for horses that are on different hay diets such as grass or alfalfa. You should not need to add any other supplements to the diet.

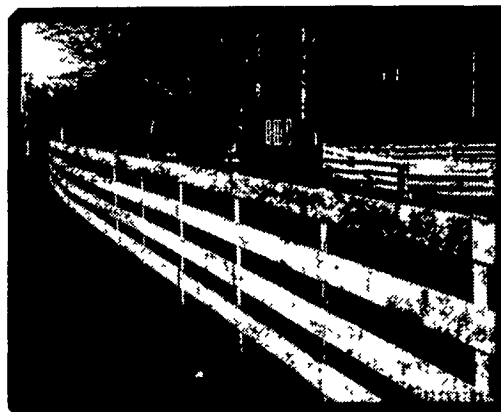
These feeds may be more expensive than developing your own ration, but they are good for the owner who does not want to spend time to research their horse's diet.

Nutrient requirements for different horses the nutrient requirements of a horse vary with its age, weight and the amount of work it performs. Good quality hay is sufficient feed for a mature horse that is ridden very little. With an increase in work, grain should be added to its diet.

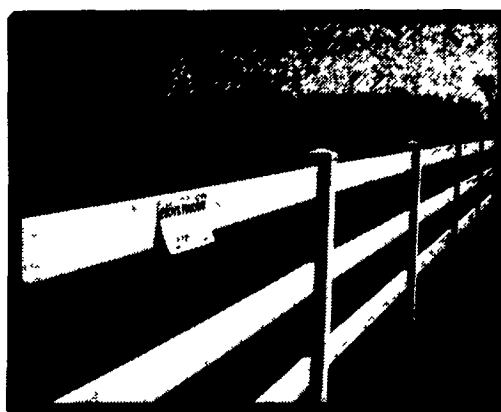
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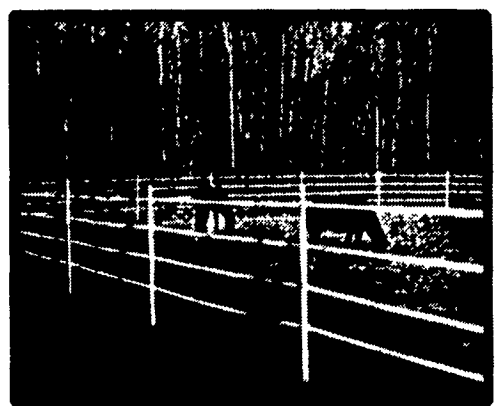
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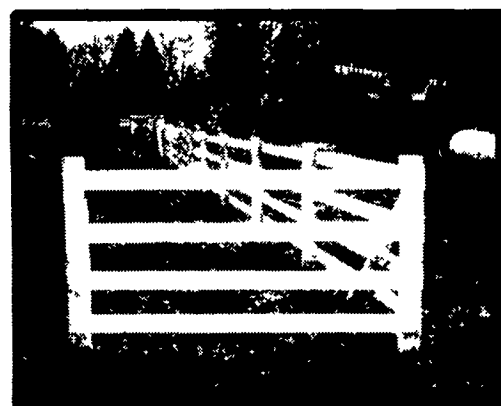
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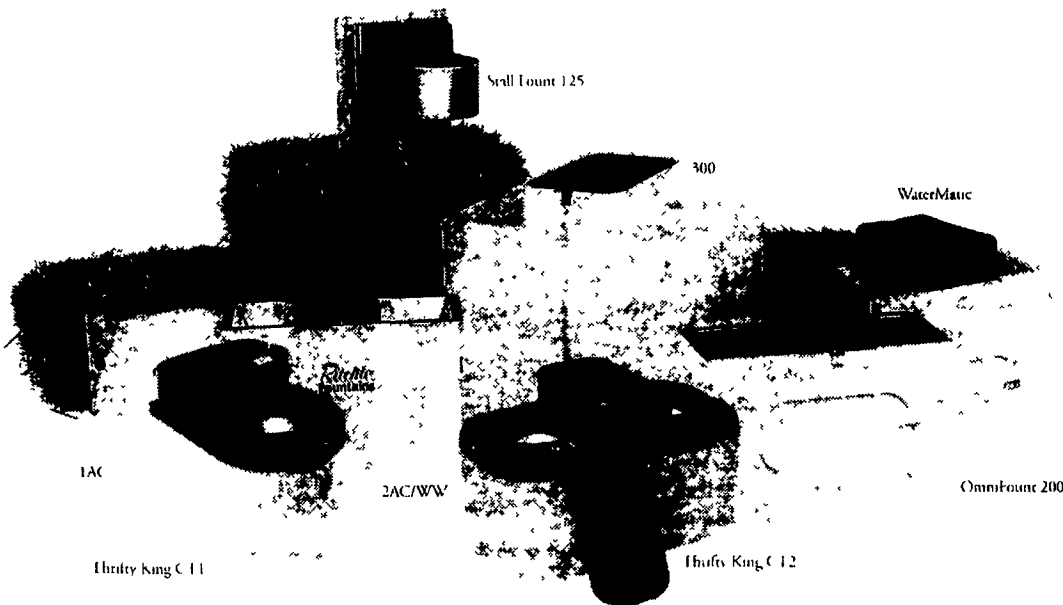
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