

Mature Horse Nutrition

Mature horses actually have limited special needs. Horses, by design, can survive well on medium quality forages. However, since we restrict our domestic horses ability to forage and range over a large distance and use of multiple feedstuffs, they certainly can and do benefit from additions of quality minerals and vitamins.

The crude protein requirements for mature horses is fairly limited and from a Crude Protein basis, if the mixture of amino acids was “ideal” could survive on a level as low as 8%. However because the amino acid content and mixture of our feedstuffs do not meet the absolute correct ratio, we need to feed additional Crude Protein to meet this amino acid need. [This is not unusual and applies to all types of animal and human diets.]

There has been a lot of attention addressed to low glycemic diets. Much of it based upon the work done by our technical partner, Kentucky Equine Research. And there are some situations in which these types of diets can be of great importance. However the vast majority of horses can handle moderate amounts of grain without difficulty, and it still remains the most economical method of providing energy. One must remember that horses are particularly adept at being selective grazers. That is to say, they tend to select plants that are young and more succulent. These same plants can have a significant concentration of sugars and non-structural carbohydrates.

Horses are actually tolerant of a wide variety of nutrients. There is much confusion about the ratio of Calcium to Phosphorous. Most people believe that the ration needs to be kept between 1:1 to 2:1 Ca:P. This is based upon primarily on the absorption rate, which is on a 1:1 basis and the ratio in bone which is close to 2:1. In reality horses have requirement for each nutrient approximately 20 grams of Ca and 12 grams of Phosphorous that should be met on a daily basis. Horses can tolerate a wide range of Ca:P ratios and can be fed ratios up to 6:1 with no ill effects; which is why we have one Regency Maintenance formula rather than a grass vs. legume formulation.

Mature horses will typically consume 2.5% of their body weight in dry matter on a daily basis. Grain feeding should be limited to no more than 1% of body weight on a dry matter basis, however most horses can do with much less.

For example a 1200-pound mature horse’s predicted daily dry matter intake would be 30 pounds per day. The amount of grain fed should not exceed 12 pounds per day, which should be divided up into at least 2 meals per day. Most horses will do well with a supplement of 0.5 %, 6 pounds for a 1200-pound horse.

Feeding some grain on a daily basis does provide benefits beyond the nutrition value of the feed. The horses look forward to seeing their handlers and are easier to handle or catch. Daily feeding provides the handler the opportunity to more closely observe each horse to check condition or potential injuries.

Prince Regency Maintenance is designed to supplement a forage diet. The specific amount that should be fed will vary with the condition of the horse. There are many factors that affect the body condition of the horse including breed difference, forage quality, activity level, parasite load, and environmental conditions. All of which make it difficult to suggest a set “feeding rate.”

Included in this manual is a “Body Condition Scoring Chart”. This chart includes written and drawn examples of different body condition. Ideally, mature horses should be kept around a “5” on this system with a range of “4 to 6”. It may be beneficial to have horses enter winter carrying slightly more flesh, but obese horses are to be avoided as they are more likely to have metabolic disease problems.

Key Features of Prince Maintenance Feed (#210001)

- Contains added fat
- Chelated Mineral-superior biological availability
- Proteins balanced for amino acids.
- Contains Natural Vitamin E- Greater biological availability with increased plasma concentrations compared to synthetic forms.