

RATION BALANCERS: FILLING THE NUTRITIONAL GAP

Although a horse may maintain good body condition eating hay or pasture alone, oftentimes his nutrient requirements are not met. And for easy keepers, feeding a typical concentrate feed may not be an option due to total calorie content.

When nutritional requirements must be met with a lower-calorie option, owners may consider a ration balancer to strengthen their horse's diet. A ration balancer is a more concentrated feed designed to provide protein, vitamins and minerals needed to balance a forage-only or unfortified grain diet in a low feeding rate.

Cutting Calories, Not Nutrition

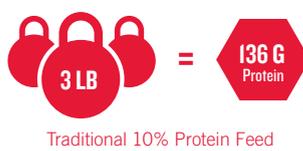
Typical grain mixes are formulated to be fed at a minimum of 3 to 5 pounds per day to meet the nutrient requirements for the average 1,000- to 1,100-pound horse. However, when a horse gains too much weight at this feeding rate, owners need to reduce the amount fed in an effort to decrease calories. This puts the horse at risk for deficiencies in essential vitamins, minerals and protein. In order to ensure all nutrient requirements are met while avoiding unwanted weight gain, switching to a ration balancer like Purina® Enrich Plus™ feed allows owners to give their horses the nutrients they need in a low-calorie diet.

Balancing Diets of Pasture-Fed Horses

Horses that do not work hard on a daily basis and who maintain bodyweight on good quality forage are also candidates for a ration balancer. These horses do not require extra calories to maintain ample body fat stores, but do need essential amino acids, including lysine (needed for healthy hair and hooves, and to support muscle maintenance and repair), and important trace minerals, such as copper and zinc. While these nutrients are not found in adequate amounts in forage, they are properly supplemented by Enrich Plus™ ration balancing feed.

Owners who feed alfalfa as their primary forage are sometimes

concerned that adding a formulated feed may provide too much protein for their horse, especially when they see high protein percentages on the tags for ration balancers. However, because Enrich Plus™ ration balancing feed is fed at a low feeding rate — only 1 to 2 pounds per day — it provides a protein level similar to a full ration of a typical 10 percent protein feed but, again, with fewer total calories. This concentrated, high-quality protein provides necessary amino acids without supplying excessive protein levels, even when fed with alfalfa hay or good green pasture.



Proper Nutrition on a Budget

One aspect of feeding a ration balancer that may give owners pause is the apparent higher price of a bag compared to a typical grain mix. However, a little goes a long way, due to the concentrated formula of Enrich Plus™ feed. With a low feeding rate, owners will notice that they get a significant number of feedings per bag — 25 to 50 when fed at the recommended rate. When calculated on a cost per day, this proves to be a very affordable option for providing balanced nutrition.

Less Starch, Less Sugar, Fewer Calories

While overweight or easy-keeper horses

don't need extra calories from any source, they can be especially sensitive to calories from starch and sugar. Owners concerned about weight gain in their horses often look for feeds with lower levels of starch and sugar to help minimize unwanted calories. Since corn and oats are significant contributors of starch, Enrich Plus™ ration balancing feed is formulated without these grains. This provides optimal levels of protein, vitamins and minerals in a low-starch, low-sugar formula. Feeding Enrich Plus™ ration balancing feed to a horse that puts on weight easily will maintain proper nutrition while helping control caloric intake.

Don't Forget About Feed Quality

Considering feed quality standards is also important for owners, since actual nutrient levels in ingredients can vary for countless reasons. That's why every bag of Purina® feed is made with our Constant Nutrition® standard, where we set stringent quality and receiving requirements for ingredients to minimize the risk of contaminants. This ensures consistency in formulation and guarantees that horses get the right nutrition every time.



For your easy keeper | Horses that do not work hard on a daily basis and who maintain bodyweight on high-quality forage are good candidates for a ration balancer.

For information on feeding recommendations and more, visit horse.purinamills.com or your local Purina® retailer.