

Feeding the Miniature Horse

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Miniature Horse Symposium
January 20th, 2008

Feedstuffs

- Forage
 - Higher fiber, lower energy
 - At least $\frac{1}{2}$ of the total diet
 - Necessary for good gastrointestinal health
- Concentrates
 - Lower fiber, higher energy
 - Use as needed to supplement energy/protein
- Supplements
 - Use as needed to make up for deficiencies



Forages



- Hays
 - Legume
 - Ex- Alfalfa
 - Higher protein, energy, and calcium
 - Grass
 - Ex- Bermuda, Orchard, Rye, etc
 - Protein less than legumes
 - Nutrient composition variable
 - Cereal
 - Ex- Oat
 - Low in phosphorous
 - Energy comparable to grasses

Forages



- Pasture
 - Nutrient content highly variable
 - Seasonal
 - Type of plants
 - Soil
 - Relatively higher in Vitamins A and E compared to hay
 - Will likely need to restrict pasture time

Concentrates

- Variety of Sources
 - Cereal grains
 - Corn, oats, barley
 - By-products
 - Beet pulp, wheat bran
- Nutrient content
 - Consult appropriate reference, feed tag for info
- Avoid overfeeding!



Supplements

- Be selective!
- Check labels to avoid over supplementation
- Look for specialized products
- Use appropriate amount



Choosing the Right Forage



- What is available
- Quality of hay
 - Stem size, weeds, nutrient composition
- Baled vs. Processed (pellets, cubes)
 - Storage, dust, eating time
- Complete Feeds
 - Usually in pelleted form
 - Variety of products
 - Lifestage
 - Miniatures
 - Balanced for proper nutrition

Nutrient Analysis of Forages



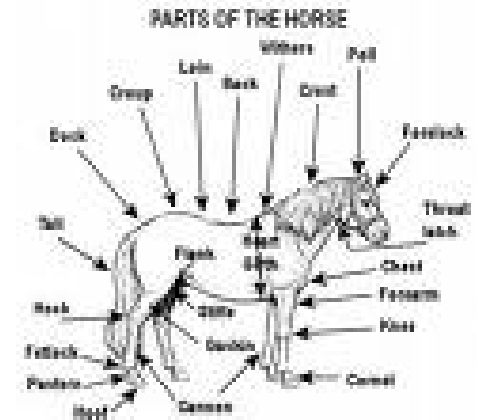
- Nutrient composition is variable
 - Cutting, soil/water composition, varietal, etc
- Nutrient analysis will provide valuable, specific information
- Check with your hay provider
- Contact your Veterinarian or local Agricultural Extension office

Amount to Feed

- Need to know who you are feeding
 - Weight
 - Body Condition
 - Life stage
 - Production
 - Activity level
 - Specific problems



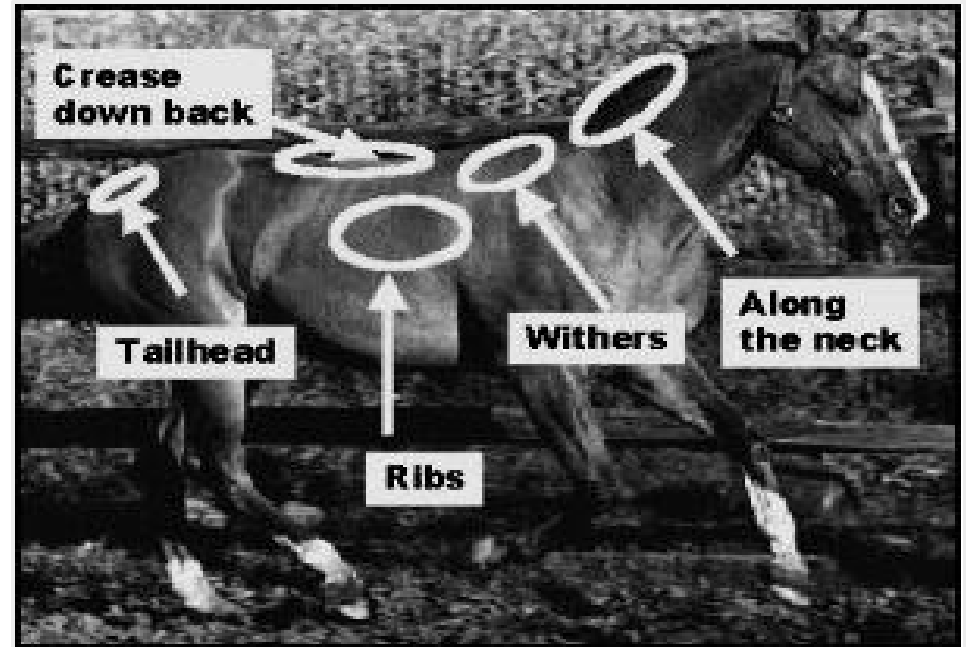
Weight



- Scale
- Measure and calculate
 - Girth, Height (at withers), Length (from mid chest to mid tailhead)
 - $(\text{Girth} \times 9.36) + (\text{Length} \times 5.01) - 348.53 = \text{weight in lbs}$
 - $(\text{Girth} \times 11.68) + (\text{Height} \times 2.85) - 357.26 = \text{weight in lbs}$
 - $(\text{Girth} \times 13.18) - 326.07 = \text{weight in lbs}$

Body Condition

- Scale of 1 (emaciated) to 9 (obese)
- Strive for 4-6, depending on circumstances



Lifestages

- Who are you feeding?
 - Age
 - Weanling, yearling, adult, geriatric
 - Activity level
 - Performance, breeding, lactating vs. pasture rest



Special Circumstances



- Teeth
- Known health problems
 - Chronic colic
 - Kidney/liver damage
- Poor doer or easy keeper
- Orthopedic problems
- Bad habits
 - Eating dirt/wood/hair, cribbing, weaving, etc.

Amount



- 1-1.5 % of body weight in forage per day
 - 3-4.5 lbs of hay/day for 300 lb horse
 - ~.5-1 flake grass hay/day
- If energy requirements are increased (lactation, late gestation, exercise)
 - Increase forage
 - Supplement with concentrates
 - Best to divide concentrates into more than 1 feeding per day
 - Introduce concentrates slowly- over ~2 weeks

Management Factors



- Feeding individuals or a herd?
 - Pecking order
 - Space between feeding areas
 - Different lifestages in one herd
- Where are they housed?
 - Pasture, stalls, drylot?
- How are they fed?
 - On ground, in feeders, on mats?

Educate Yourself!



- Nutrient Requirements of Horses, 6th Edition
 - Available through the National Academies Press
www.nap.edu
- Seek advice from an Equine Nutritionist or Veterinarian
 - Don't be afraid to ask for help!

In Closing

- **Don't feed too much!**
- **Keep the diet simple**
- **Get a scale to weigh feed**
- **Feed according to each individual's needs**



References

- Higgins AJ and Snyder JR. The Equine Manual 2nd Ed. Elsevier Ltd. 2006.
- Thompson, KN. Basic Equine Nutrition and its Physiologic Functions. Purina Mills, Inc. and the AAEP. 1997
- Watson, J. Unpublished notes. 2006

Questions?

