

Why Is Broodmare Nutrition Different?

Breeding mares have got a very different nutritional job from sport horses, hobby horses or young horses. Their **horse feed** needs must sustain not only their own body condition and gut health, but also the unborn foal during **pregnancy** and the mare's own recovery and **lactation** after **foaling**. So broodmare nutrition is less about pushing calories and more about matching **nutrient requirements** to life stage.

At the start of pregnancy, many mares need only modest changes if they are already coping well on a complete **forage-based diet**. As **late gestation** begins, the growing foetus places more demand on **energy**, **protein**, and key **micronutrients**. After foaling, the mare's needs rise again because milk production can be taxing, especially when **milk yield** is high. At this point a careful feeding programme counts.

Broodmare feeding also differs because the aim is to maintain the mare's **condition score** without creating excess **starch content** or upsetting **digestive safety**. A mare that loses too much weight may struggle to support pregnancy or produce enough milk, while a mare that becomes over-conditioned can face metabolic issues. Good **equine nutrition** for broodmares therefore centres on steady **fibre intake**, sensible use of concentrates, and a balanced supply of **protein**, **calcium**, **phosphorus**, **trace minerals**, and **vitamin E**.

Kinds of Horse Feed for Broodmares

Several **kinds of horse feed** that can suit broodmares, depending on hay quality, workload, body condition, and stage of reproduction. A good starting point is usually **hay** or **pasture**, with **concentrates** added only when forage alone does not meet requirements.

A **complete horse feed** can be a useful option because it combines fiber, energy, vitamins, and minerals in one product. These feeds are often useful where forage quality is variable or where you want a simpler ration with less chance of imbalance. However, not every complete feed is automatically ideal for broodmares, so the label should be checked for adequate **crude protein**, adequate **digestible energy**, and correct **mineral balance**.

Balancers are another important option. A balancer is a concentrated pellet or cube designed to supply vitamins, minerals, and high-quality amino acids in small quantities. This is useful for mares on good-quality hay and pasture who need support without extra calories. Balancers are especially helpful when you want to improve **ration balance** without increasing feed volume too much.

A simple **horse feed mix recipe** may combine chaff, a stud cube, and a balancer, but mixes need careful planning to avoid nutrient gaps. If you make up your own ration, pay attention to the level of **protein**, the quality of **essential amino acids**, and whether the mix supports **lactation support** after foaling.

Horse feed companies vary in approach, but a good manufacturer will provide clear feeding rates, ingredient profiles, and guidance for breeding mares. For example, **spillers horse feed** ranges are often considered by owners looking for mare-specific or stud-specific products, though the best choice always depends on the individual mare and **Helpful hints** the forage available.

How Much Horse Feed Ought to a Broodmare Need?

No single answer exists for how much **horse feed** a broodmare should have because intake depends on age, size, body condition, stage of pregnancy, milk demand, and forage quality. A practical **horse feeding chart** can provide a starting point, but it should be matched to the mare, not followed blindly.

A sensible **horse feed calculator uk** approach starts with the basics: estimate bodyweight, assess **body condition score**, and determine how much **forage intake** the mare gets from **hay** and **pasture**. Most broodmares should receive forage as the foundation of the ration, with concentrates used only to cover the shortfall in energy, protein, and micronutrients. A forage-first strategy promotes **gut health** and helps keep the digestive tract working naturally.

For many mares, feeding should be based on percentage of bodyweight and then modified based on condition. If a mare is losing weight, increasing **energy** and **crude protein** from a balanced feed may be appropriate. If she is already in ideal condition, a balancer plus good forage may be enough. The key is **ration balance**: enough to support pregnancy and milk production, but not so much that it encourages excess weight gain or a spike in **starch content**.

The most effective way to use a **horse feeding chart** is to treat it as a guide, then review the mare every few weeks. Look at ribs, topline, and overall **body condition**. During **late gestation** and early lactation, demands can rise quickly, so regular reassessment matters. If you are unsure, a **horse feed calculator uk** can help you compare forage, concentrate, and balancer quantities, but professional **horse feed advice uk** is often worth seeking for breeding mares.

10 Principles of Sustaining Horses: Mare Edition

Sound **horse feeding rules** are particularly important for broodmares because mistakes can impact both mare and foal. These **10 rules of feeding horses** are a strong starting point for a broodmare feeding programme:

- Build the ration on **forage** first, using **hay** and **pasture** as the primary feed.
- Add concentrates only when needed to support **energy**, **protein**, and **micronutrients**.
- Set **starch levels** moderate to preserve **digestive health**.
- Check **body condition score** regularly and adjust the ration slowly.
- Make sure the diet supports **calcium**, **phosphorus**, and **trace minerals**.
- Emphasise quality **protein** and **essential amino acids** rather than just feed quantity.
- Avoid sudden changes that disrupt **gut health** and **digestive safety**.
- Offer constant access to clean water and reliable forage.
- Match the ration to the stage of **pregnancy**, especially **late gestation** and **lactation**.
- Reassess the feeding programme after **foaling** and again after **weaning**.

Such principles help keep the mare stable, support **milk yield**, and reduce the risk of digestive upset. Broodmares are not the place for guesswork. A steady, consistent feeding plan is better than frequent changes or over-complicated mixes.

One of the most important **horse feeding rules** is to avoid chasing weight with large grain meals. High-grain rations can increase digestive risk if they overload the hindgut. Instead, use a balanced ration with appropriate fibre, sensible **starch content**, and a focus on long-term health.

When to Switch Feed During Pregnancy and After Foaling

Nutritional changes should match the mare's life stage. During early **pregnancy**, many mares stay on a fairly basic diet if their condition is good. The goal is maintenance, not overfeeding. In **late gestation**, however, the growing foal increases the mare's need for **energy**, **protein**, and minerals, so many owners increase a stud ration, balancer, or **complete horse feed**.

The best **feed transition** is slow. Sudden changes can upset **digestive health** and reduce feed intake. Any new **horse feed** should be introduced over several days, especially if the mare is already dealing with fluctuating appetite or limited turnout. This helps protect the hindgut and maintains feed acceptance.

After **foaling**, the mare's diet often needs to support rising **milk production**. During early lactation, many mares need more digestible calories and higher-quality protein because milk output can be substantial. This is where a thoughtful ration makes a difference: good forage, a suitable concentrate if needed, and enough **micronutrients** to support recovery and milk synthesis.

After **weaning**, needs usually change again. Once the foal no longer relies on her milk, the mare may need less energy, especially if she has maintained or gained weight during lactation. This is another point where a gradual **feed transition** matters. Reduce feed slowly rather than cutting portions suddenly, and keep watching **condition score** so the mare stays healthy.

Picking an Appropriate Broodmare Feed

The right broodmare ration depends on forage quality, feeding goals, and the mare's stage of reproduction. Good **horse feed advice uk** usually starts by checking the forage analysis, then choosing supplements or concentrates that fill the nutritional gaps. In some cases, the right answer is a high-fibre **complete horse feed**. For others, a **balancer** alongside forage is enough.

Seek a feed that provides enough **protein** and **essential amino acids** to support tissue repair, foetal development, and milk production. Also check the levels of **calcium**, **phosphorus**, **trace minerals**, and **vitamin E**, because these are crucial for reproduction and immune support. These **micronutrients** are often the difference between a ration that looks adequate and one that truly supports broodmare performance.

Some owners compare options from different **horse feed companies**, looking for products that are easy to feed and clearly labelled. Brands such as **spillers horse feed** are often considered because they offer breeding-focused ranges, but the best product is the one that suits the mare's actual requirements and the available forage. Always think in terms of **ration balance** rather than brand alone.

A feed balancer is especially useful if the mare gets plenty of forage but needs stronger nutritional support. It can add concentrated vitamins and minerals without overloading the diet with calories. Often, this is a practical solution for mares with decent body condition but higher breeding demands. A good balancer can also help maintain **mineral balance** when forage quality varies.

Horse Feed Cost: Budgeting for a Broodmare

Budgeting for **horse feed cost** is an key part of broodmare management. The question of **how much does horse feed cost** offers no fixed answer because it depends on your forage, whether you use a **balancer** or **complete horse feed**, and how much feed the mare needs. A lean mare in **lactation** may cost more to feed than a well-maintained mare on good forage because her ration may need extra usable energy and protein.

When estimating **ration cost**, include far more than the bag price of concentrate. Add the cost of hay, pasture management, supplements, and any additional feed used during **late gestation** or after **foaling**. The real **daily feeding cost** is the total spent to keep the mare fit and on target condition, not just the cost of one bucket feed.

A mare on good pasture and hay may need only a balancer and a modest amount of concentrate, which can keep costs reasonable. A mare that struggles to maintain condition or produces a high **milk yield** may require a costlier feeding programme. That said, well-planned feeding is often better value than correcting problems caused by underfeeding, poor **digestive health**, or repeated ration changes.

When reviewing **horse feed cost**, think in terms of the mare's health. A marginally more costly feed may be worthwhile if it improves **body condition**, supports reproduction, and reduces the risk of later issues. Good budgeting is part of responsible broodmare care.

Frequent Feeding Errors to Steer Clear Of

Mare ration errors can bring serious consequences. **Excess Feeding** may cause excessive weight gain, reduced movement, and physical strain. **Feeding Too Little** can result in weight loss, lower breeding success, slower recovery after foaling, and inadequate support for milk production. The aim is not simply to feed more, but to feed appropriately.

Another common issue is too much starch. High **starch amounts** can undermine **digestive health** and boost the risk of colic. A forage-first ration is usually less risky and more consistent. If extra calories are needed, it is often better to use roughage and oil sources or a thoughtfully balanced complete feed than to rely on large cereal meals.

Gastrointestinal distress is a risk whenever feed changes are too sudden or the ration is very rich. Similarly, poor mineral balance can create nutritional gaps, especially in mares supporting a pregnancy or producing milk. Reproduction puts pressure on the body, so the feed must remain steady, digestible, and well-balanced.

Laminitis is another concern where body condition rises too high or pasture intake becomes excessive. This is why monitoring **body condition score** matters so much. Broodmares should stay comfortably fit, not fat. If in doubt, adjust the ration step by step and review forage intake before increasing hard feed.

Mare Feeding FAQs

What is the best feed for a broodmare while pregnant?

A broodmare should mainly receive good-quality **roughage**, such as **haylage** and **grazing**, with additional **horse feed** only if her **body condition**, forage quality, or stage of **pregnancy** requires it. In many cases, a **feed balancer** or a **complete horse feed** can help provide **protein, fuel, calcium, P, micronutrients**, and **vitamin E supplement**. The best approach is to match the ration to the mare's condition and stage of gestation.

How does broodmare feed change after foaling?

After **foaling**, feed usually needs to go up to promote **milk production** and post-birth recovery. Many mares need more **digestible energy**, more nutritious **protein**, and good **micronutrients** to support **lactation**. Changes should be gradual, using a sensible **feed transition** so **gut health** stays stable. A mare with a large **milk yield** may need a more concentrated ration than she did during pregnancy.

Is a complete horse feed suitable for broodmares?

Yes, a **complete horse feed** can be suitable for broodmares if it is designed for breeding stock and fits the mare's needs. Check the levels of **crude protein, energy, calcium, phosphorus**, and **trace minerals**, plus the overall **starch content**. A complete feed is often handy, but it should still be used within a wider forage-based ration and not as a replacement for good-quality **hay** or **pasture**.

How much does horse feed cost for a broodmare?

Horse feed cost varies depending on the mare's size, stage of reproduction, forage quality, [overweight horse feed](#) and whether she needs a **balancer**, concentrates, or a full stud ration. To estimate **how much does horse feed cost**, include forage, any concentrate feed, supplements, and changes made during **late gestation** or **lactation**. The true **daily feeding cost** is the overall ration cost, not just the price of one bag of feed.

How do I use a horse feeding chart or calculator for a broodmare?

A **horse feeding chart** or **horse feed calculator uk** should be used as a beginning guide, not a fixed rule. First estimate the mare's bodyweight and assess her **condition score**. Then review her **forage intake** from **hay** and **pasture**, and add feeds that balance the ration. A calculator can help with portion sizes, but it should be adjusted to the mare's **pregnancy**, **lactation**, and overall **equine nutrition** needs. For owners who want simple guidance, a **horse feeding chart** can be paired with expert **horse feed advice uk** to create a practical, effective feeding programme.

What should I feed my horse quiz?

If you are wondering, what should I feed my horse quiz style, the answer for broodmares is to focus on four questions: Is her **body condition** consistent? How nutritious is the **forage**? Is she in **late gestation** or **lactation**? Does she need more **energy**, **protein**, or **micronutrients**? Once you consider those, you can choose between a **balancer**, a **complete horse feed**, or a forage-led ration with supplements. For broodmares, the best "quiz" result is usually a well-rounded diet built around the mare's actual stage of reproduction.

Horse feeding basics: what is the simplest approach for broodmares?

For **horse feed for beginners**, the easiest approach is to keep the ration forage-led, add a suitable **balancer** if the mare needs nutritional support, and avoid overcomplicated mixtures. Good **horse feeding rules** are to make changes slowly, keep **starch levels** sensible, and monitor **condition score** regularly. If the mare is in **pregnancy** or **lactation**, choose feed with clear labelling and seek reliable **horse feed advice uk** when needed.

Is it possible to make my own horse feed mix recipe for a broodmare?

Yes, but a homemade **horse feed mix recipe** needs careful planning to avoid nutrient shortfalls. Broodmares need the right amount of **protein**, **energy**, **calcium**, **phosphorus**, **trace minerals**, and **vitamin E**, plus enough fibre for **digestive health**. A DIY ration can work, but it is often safer to use a trusted **complete horse feed** or balancer unless you are confident about balancing the diet properly.

Bifid UK

+44 800 422 0888

sales@bifid.co.uk

<https://bifid.com/uk/>