Stamina without the fizz?

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As horse owners, we all want our horses to have the stamina to perform at their best, but it can be tricky to find the right balance. Some horses are prone to excitability and are more sensitive to certain feeds. The good news is that there are ways to feed your horse for a controlled performance...



Don’t underestimate the importance of forage

Okay so this one might sound like old news, but forage should be the foundation of every horse’s diet. As well as being essential for digestive health and mental well-being, forage makes a significant contribution towards total daily energy/calorie intake.

Forage provides a source of slowly digestible fibre, providing a constant even supply of controlled energy as the hindgut steadily digests the forage. Even horses who maintain their weight easily (or too easily) on forage alone should not be restricted to less than 1.5%

of their current bodyweight on a dry matter basis, equivalent to approx. 9kg hay (11kg if you intend to soak it before feeding) or 11-12kg of haylage for a 500kg horse without grazing.

Choose the right type of feed

The type of feed you choose can have a significant impact on your horse's behaviour. Regardless of your chosen discipline, the amount of energy (calories) in your horse’s diet should be adjusted according to their body condition. Balancers are a great way of supplying vitamins, minerals and amino acids to horses who maintain condition well on small rations of feed. Some good doers in light work can easily maintain weight on forage alone and balancers provide few calories due to the small amounts fed. Balancers are non-heating and therefore reduce the risk of unwanted excitable behaviour.

Feeds high in sugar and starch such as traditional coarse mixes can lead to excitable and spooky behaviour in some horses. To avoid this, avoid cereals and choose feeds high in fibre and oil such as SPILLERS Stamina+ Cubes(open in new tab), as these provide slow-release energy and can help support endurance exercise without contributing to excitability.

As a practical guide, start by choosing feeds containing less than 15% starch or for very sensitive horses, less than 10% starch. However, remember the amount of starch and sugar consumed from any feed will depend on how much of it is eaten!

Have you tried SPILLERS Instant Energy supplement?

This unique recipe aims to encourage a focused and more energetic response from horses who may lack that ridden sparkle. It has a mixed energy profile and includes ginseng - a 'feel good' herb traditionally used to support mental capacity. Along with amino acids to support an energetic performance and yeast, rich in B vitamins involved in energy metabolism. Find out more here.(open in new tab)

Avoid sudden or frequent changes

Some changes in diet may be inevitable, particularly for horses staying away at shows but frequent or sudden changes in feed and forage increase the risk of conditions such as colic and should be avoided as far as possible. Feeding for optimum performance and recovery begins long before the day of competition. In some cases, horses work harder during training than on the day of competition but regardless of whether this is the case, establishing an appropriate diet beforehand and resisting the temptation to make changes immediately before or after an event is key.

Choose wisely

Feeding horses for stamina without excitability is possible. By choosing the right type of feed and feeding little and often, you can help to support your horse's stamina without contributing to excitability.

If you’re not sure which feed is right for your horse, get in touch with us via the SPILLERS Care-Line on 01908 226626.

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