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What is a feed balancer?  
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Published May 27, 2021

With the grass coming through thick and fast, many of you are undoubtedly wondering what, if anything, to feed your horse.

Although many horses and ponies maintain weight easily on grass alone, it may not be providing a balanced diet. Even in spring and summer months, levels of copper, zinc and selenium in UK grazing are typically low. Your horse's diet may also be lacking in other key nutrients such as vitamin E and lysine, particularly if they are in work or turned out on "poor" or restricted grazing " this is where feed balancers come in.

## What is a balancer?

Balancers are small, nutrient dense feeds (often pellets) designed to provide a concentrated supply of vitamins, minerals and protein. Due the low feeding rate, balancers provide negligible amounts of energy (calories), starch and sugar per daily serving, making them the ideal choice for good doers. Depending on the balancer you choose, they may also contain added functional ingredients such as pre and probiotics for digestive support and glucosamine for joint support.



## What do balancers really do?

Myth buster number one: Balancers are not "conditioning"

On a kilo for kilo basis, some balancers may contain the same amount of energy (calories) as a conditioning feed but due to the low feeding rate, the amount of energy your horse actually consumes is negligible. In fact, the recommended amount of "Horse and Pony Cubes" is around 5 times higher in calories than the recommended amount of balancer!

Myth buster number two: Lite balancers are not significantly lower in calories

On a kilo for kilo basis, "lite" balancers may be lower in calories (or more correctly energy) than alternative options but when you consider most are fed at just 500g per day for a 500g horse, there is very little difference in the amount of calories consumed. Due to the low feeding rate, all balancers (except stud balancers) contribute a negligible level of calories to the total diet, regardless of whether or not they say "lite" on the bag. So if this is the case why bother?

The additional benefits of choosing a "lite" balancer will vary between manufacturers so if you're unsure, contact their helpline for advice. SPILLERS [Lite & Lean Balancer](#) is specifically designed for horses and ponies on calorie restricted diets and in particular, contains high levels of lysine and vitamin E. It also includes added magnesium, FOS and cinnamon to help support a healthy metabolism.

## When should a balancer be fed?

Balancers are a great option for horses that

- Maintain weight easily on forage alone
- Maintain weight on less than the recommended amount of compound feed (or other feeds containing added vitamins and minerals)
- Are on feeds that do not contain added vitamins and minerals such as grass nuts, alfalfa and sugar beet

## Can I feed a vitamin and mineral supplement instead?

An alternative option is to use a broad spectrum vitamin and mineral supplement although as the name suggests, such supplements may not be tailored to meet your horse's specific requirements. Vitamin and mineral supplements often don't provide additional protein and amino acids either.

## How much balancer do I need to feed?

Most balancers (except stud balancers) are designed to be fed alongside forage at rate of 100g per 100kg bodyweight per day. However if you are feeding a reduced ration of compound feed, the full amount of balancer will not be required. For example, half the recommended amount of balancer generally complements half the recommended amount of compound feed.

## Which balancer is right for my horse?

Consider the following:

- Age
- Workload
- Lifestyle and base diet " does your horse have ad lib forage or is he on a calorie restricted diet?
- Which (if any!) functional ingredients may benefit your horse " are you simply looking to provide the nutrients required to balance a forage based diet or would you like to provide added joint, digestive or metabolism support too?

## Are balancers expensive?

In short, no. At the top end of the price scale SPILLERS [Supple + Senior Balancer](#) will last a 500kg horse 30 days and costs £1.24 per day. At the other end, SPILLERS [Daily Balancer](#) costs just £0.76 per day. In contrast a full ration of SPILLERS [High Fibre Cubes](#) (3kg per day for a 500kg horse) costs £2.09 per day so despite a larger pay out initially, long term, balancers are a bargain for good doers!

Balancers really are brilliant! Whether you are looking to provide the basics or additional benefits, horses and ponies get everything they need but without the risk of weight gain.