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Enrichment Tips & Tricks – Keeping Your Horse Entertained & Happy

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Struggling to keep your horse slim without stabling them all day?

Looking to enrich the life of your horse while they’re on box rest?

With so many good doers needing careful weight management, we’ve collated a few tips for you to consider which can help your horse maintain a healthy weight without spending hours without forage, turnout or enrichment!



How to Extend Eating Time Naturally

SPILLERS supported research has shown feeding 6kg of hay in 3, **double layered, small holed haynets** can increase eating time by 2 hours per night compared to feeding the same amount of hay in a single net.

Spread small forage rations around the stable or paddock (if they have little or no grass) to provide variety and encourage movement. You could hang bundles of tasty natural plants for the horse to pick at in the stable too – just be careful the plants are safe for horses to eat.

For some horses, **straw** provides a great source of fibre - it takes longer for horses to chew and is lower in calories than hay making it a super replacement for up to half of their forage ration. Straw needs introducing very slowly to allow their digestive tract time to adapt to the different fibre and adapt the way they physically grind their teeth. Straw shouldn't be used for horses with poor dental health or those prone to colic.

Slow Feeding Solutions That Work

There are heaps of creative options on the market now. Some like the Grad-Dual Feeder help slow down bucket meals, particularly effective for larger horses with big muzzles, but still a great option for ponies too.

Many hay boxes extend forage eating time which can be a game changer for those on limited forage rations. Around 30% of forage ends up on the muck heap and with prices so high, now it’s even more important to avoid wasting hay. The various designs available can make soaking hay easier, encourage horses to eat in a more natural position, with their heads down, help reduce wastage and provide enrichment by making forage last longer.

Products such as the Hay-Saver pictured are light weight, easy to use and offer both a plastic and net grill option and can be used in the field or stable. The Hay-Play offers a great way to make forage rations more fun, slow down eating and reduce boredom.

Home made ‘toys’ can be cheaper options too – Redwings Horse Sanctuary are excellent at thinking up ideas such as stuffing old wellies with hay for those on box rest.

Increasing Movement for Health & Weight Control

Horses have evolved to range miles every day in search of food, but this is often limited by the way we keep them these days - they don’t have to move far for their next meal on small lush pastures.

Individual paddocks prevent play and socialization so where possible **keeping them in herds** will increase activity through play and mutual grooming and reduce boredom. Horses are naturally social animals so if you keep your horse alone perhaps it's time to get your horse a friendly goat or sheep to keep them company?

Once the clocks change – **get riding again**! Even small amounts of work have been shown to help improve insulin sensitivity and of course they’re not eating while they’re exercising too.

If you can’t ride them, spend more time grooming your horse, especially those on box rest, or do some **ground work** to occupy them.

Grazing Muzzles

Although an emotive subject, muzzles are increasingly popular and a great option for the majority of horses and ponies who are quite happy once they're used to them. They can allow horses to spend longer in the field and less time stabled – more movement, steady grazing, enrichment and fresh air – I'm sure I know what I'd pick if I was a horse.

For more information on all the topics head over the newly updated SPILLERS Slimmers' hub. With in depth advice to help you help your horse or pony maintain a healthier body condition!

There are lots of different designs to sort all types of head shapes so do some research rather than make an impulse purchase. SPILLERS research using one muzzle in the UK found they can reduce grass intake approximately 80%, regardless of the season. Results vary between individuals so it's important to still monitor your horse's weight, body condition and behaviour rather than rely solely on the muzzle to prevent weight gain.

Check out our in-depth grazing muzzles page in our Slimmers' Hub for more tips to help you use a muzzle successfully.

Building Creative Track Systems

Track systems can come in all shapes and sizes; it's up to you to work out what you can create and what size it needs to be for your individual or herd. Again, do plenty of research, there's a wealth of ideas and information out there to help you make a safe and interesting environment for your horse to enjoy.

Make use of any natural features you have available, be creative - tracks don't require masses of land or need to cost a fortune. Consider the overall size of the grazing area, leaving too much grass may still provide excess grazing for some, especially those at significant risk of laminitis or are overweight. You may be able to incorporate parts of the yard itself to have more space and less grass, include woodchip pens or make loafing areas.

Some people combine their track system with a strip grazing method, moving the inner fence allowing access to more grass in a controlled way. Use the "inner" field for grazing thinner horses who are better suited to more grass. Or you could leave the central area to make hay or leave it for winter grazing.

We'd love you to share any tips or photos of your clever ideas to help spread the word and make a better world for all our horses and ponies! Take a look at the SPILLERS Slimmers' Facebook group and tag us so we don't miss your posts!

Personalised Support When You Need It

Our nutrition specialists are available to offer tailored advice, ensuring you get the most from your horse’s diet.

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Which balancer does my horse need?

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