

Feeding a “Poor Doer”

By Emma Kay, Ti Toki Stud, Waiuku.

Over the years I have experimented a lot with feeding different feeds to put weight on skinny horses.

Being in the business of agisting racehorses means finding good feeds that the horses will do well on while still making some profit!

I have done heaps of reading up as well as trying various things on my own horses and those in my care.

Since being involved with Jenny and learning the importance of “getting the diet right”, I have come to learn key things in proper nutrition of our horses. There is never “one thing” that you do, it is a combination things, that get a good result.

The first thing that comes to mind is hay. Vital in keeping the flora in the hind gut happy and healthy. Short-green, growing grass is relatively low in fibre, (as opposed to mature, stalky grass) there fore we need to supplement with it. Ideally hay should be available to the horses throughout the day. I find horses out on grass will still eat good quality hay.

Top quality minerals and vitamins –Another vital part of the equation. Premium New-Zealand-Horse Minerals and Alleviate-C allow me to add the minerals separately so I know exactly what each horse is consuming.

Feeding plain feeds and adding Minerals separately means I can increase the plain feed when necessary (eg in bad weather or if I feel the horse needs more) and I can leave the Mineral amount at the correct dose (you don't want to be varying the doses of selenium, copper, zinc etc). Similarly I can decrease the plain feed without affecting the mineral dose.

Premixed feeds

I avoid premixed feed for several reasons:

- I don't want to use feeds with molasses in them. Along with whole grains they can very easily upset the hind gut causing fizzy behavior and drop gut pH, killing important bacteria.

- Many contain unspecified pre-mix minerals – How much and what are they? Best added separately and be a brand you can trust.
- Have the disadvantage of not being able to alter the quantities fed without also altering the mineral quantities.

I prefer to use extruded feeds such as Dunstan Extruded Barley and Extruded Rice because nothing else has been added. Extrusion makes them highly digestible without the problems of whole grain.

Here is my basic recipe for feeding a 500kg thoroughbred in light condition. This would be a horse with ribs clearly showing and no top line at all. He would be getting little or no grass and be in light work (3 to 4 30 min rides per week).

This is total feed for the day. It can be fed in 2 meals. Introduce new things gradually!

Hay – at least ½ bale a day

Premium Lucerne cubes – 1 kg

Dunstan Extruded Barley – 0.5kg – 2kg (build up to 2kg)

Oil (soya or similar) 1 -2 cups. This must be introduced gradually over 14 days and can take up to 3 months for a horse to adjust fully to a fat based diet.

Soya bean meal (full fat) – 1 cup. Sunflower seeds are good too, can be 50/50 with soya meal. Introduce gradually.

Premium NZ Horse Minerals, Alleviate-C, Tox-Defy, salt.

A horse on this diet should show improvement within 1 -2 weeks.

If you are worried that this is too much or have a cross-bred that may put on weight quicker than a TB then start with smaller amounts and build up.

It is a common mistake to feed up a skinny horse that you have just purchased without riding him and getting to know him first!

When a skinny horse begins to put on condition he WILL have more energy and may show you this in ways you would rather he didn't! You can perhaps at this time cut back on his feed a little or up his work load. Be a realist. He is a horse after all.



Before



5 weeks later



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