



Feeding the Show Horse.

The old clichés, ‘sparkle without fizz’ and ‘controlled energy’ are particularly applicable to show horses and ponies, whether shown in hand or under saddle. In some cases, it is difficult to keep adequate bodyweight and coat condition for show ring requirements and to maintain the horse in top show condition throughout the season is often a feat in itself.

A good quality ration for a show horse should contain the following ingredients:

- Protein, often in the form of cooked flaked soya to aid muscle development and body condition. Levels are typically around 13% to 15%.
- Oil content tends to be higher than most mixes at around 6% and this is an excellent energy dense feed which is digested slowly resulting in a calm, controllable horse. Not only will oil promote body condition, it is also vital for coat condition too.
- Fibre. Look for a feed which is high in digestible fibre, in the form of soya hulls. This fibre source will provide energy levels, but unlike high starch diets, which are digested rapidly, the fibre provides slow release, stamina energy. Some mixes also contain fibre in the form of alfalfa which is ideal for the well-being of the horse’s gut.
- Cooked, flaked cereals. Although mixes and cubes high in cereals can have a deleterious effect on the horse’s manners, it is important to have a source of starch to provide that all important ‘sparkle’.
- High levels of minerals and vitamins to obtain optimum performance.

Most feed companies produce a condition or show mix. Two excellent products are supplied by **Hickstead Horse Feeds – Condition Mix and Condition Cubes.**

When deciding on a suitable ration for the show horse or pony, several things should be taken into consideration:

- Breed of the horse. Mountain and Moorland breeds on the whole tend to be good doers and very laid back. For these types, low energy feeds are often laid down as fat so smaller amounts of a higher energy concentrate are ideal. Hacks and riding horses tend to have more natural energy and may need more feed to maintain condition. A conditioning ration is ideal.



- Feed related problems. Many native breeds are prone to laminitis and it is difficult to sustain body and coat condition without bringing on an attack of this painful and debilitating disease. Avoid all mixes if your pony is prone to laminitis and feed **Hickstead High Fibre Cubes**. The high oil content of the cubes will maintain show condition.
- The horse being used for other disciplines. Many horses and ponies are 'multi purpose'; particularly children's ponies that may be at pony club camp one week and in the show ring the next. It is important not to allow these horses and ponies to become obese as not only is it unethical but an overweight horse will not be fit enough to do other disciplines.

Some show judges still expect obese horses in the show ring. Not only does fat help to hide a multitude of sins, it is also extremely unhealthy for the horse. A fat horse is an unfit horse and the extra weight on the joints, spine and around the vital organs can cause serious ailments, not to mention potential respiratory problems. The sooner these judges come into the modern world and judge a horse on its merits rather than how obese it is, the better.