

OVERWEIGHT HORSES

Obesity in horses can lead to laminitis, colic, insulin resistance, overheating and numerous other health conditions.

Care must be taken with obese horses to:

- Provide quality nutrition in controlled portions to ensure overall health while reducing caloric intake
- Reduce weight at a slow to moderate pace to avoid causing other problems
- Increase fitness at a cautious pace to avoid injury

Providing owners with the proper weight management tools can help ensure the success of a weight-loss program for obese horses.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Be patient. Slow and steady is the correct approach for reducing body weight and will help avoid stress and digestive upsets.
 - Increase exercise levels gradually as the horse becomes more fit. Don't overdo it.
 - Feed horses separately to better control and monitor feed intake.
 - Monitor weight gains or losses using a weight scale, weight tape or body condition scoring system—and adjust feeding rate as necessary.
 - Maximum targeted weight loss is 1 kg/100 kg BW/week (e.g. for an 1,100 lb horse: 1.5 lb/day).
 - Owners should work with veterinarians to develop a total health care program including vaccinations, deworming and dental care.
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DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Many overweight horses cannot tolerate high levels of starch and sugar in the diet and should be maintained on rations that are low in calories and contain higher levels of digestible fibre. Horses in training that are “easy keepers” should be fed lower calorie feeds, but in sufficient amounts to meet dry matter and all other nutrient requirements.
- Ideally, never feed less than 1.5% of BW in long-stemmed fibre per day.
- Grass hay is recommended over legume hay due to lower calorie content.
- Always provide good quality grass hay, and free choice access to salt.
- Fresh clean water should be available at all times. Horses that have been exercised should be cooled out and rehydrated properly before being fed and before having access to unlimited water.
- It is important to know exactly how much feed is being fed. Therefore, a scale should be used to determine the weight of a given meal or daily ration of hay and concentrate to avoid excessive over- or underfeeding.
- Providing a reduced calorie, good quality balanced diet with appropriate amino acids, vitamins and minerals is essential to supporting appropriate weight loss, while maintaining lean tissue mass. Feeding rates should be determined according to the target or ideal body weight and body condition score, as opposed to the current (obese) body condition. All changes should be made gradually.

SUGGESTED PURINA PRODUCTS

OVERWEIGHT HORSES

If the hay has a protein content greater than 12% (on a dry matter basis), feed **EQUILIBRIUM EQUILIZER**. If less than 12% (DM), use **EQUILIBRIUM OPTIMAL**.

Provide 1.5% of BW in long-stemmed fibre (hay).



NORMAL BODY CONDITION

Recommended:

Use **SUPERFIBRA INTEGRI-T** when ideal body condition is reached.



Alternatives:

SUPERFIBRA CLASSIC
SUPERFIBRA PLUS
SUPERFIBRA ULTRA



Supplements:

Use **HORSE-SHIELD** to enhance pre-cecal environment and optimize pH.



FEED RATE PROTOCOL NOTICE

This feeding protocol described here pertains only to Cargill Limited Horse Feeds. There is not established feeding protocol that all feed companies must follow. Purina provides two feeding rates on their tag a “Minimum” and a “Purina Superior”. The “Minimum” meets the levels established by the NRC Nutrient Requirements of Horses (2007), which will prevent all classic nutritional deficiencies. The “Purina Superior” is a greater level of fortification that promotes an optimal level of performance and immunity. By no means does that imply “Minimum” is subpar, and for the non-competitive horse, that stays home year round and has no health issues there is probably no need to exceed this level. However, if you are feeding a true equine athlete, with all the immune stresses associated with that level of competition, then the “Purina Superior” level is paramount to ensure an optimal level of performance and immunity.