

What Grass-Free Feeding Means for Horses

Feeding without grass involves managing a horse's diet without regular access to grazing, so the ration must deliver everything the horse would normally get from pasture. That changes the role of **horse feed** from a simple top-up to the main source of nutrients, energy, and often a significant amount of fibre. In practical terms, the diet has to work as a **forage replacement** or, at minimum, a reliable **forage stand-in** alongside hay, haylage, or other conserved fibre.

A grass-free setup may work for horses in stabled management, horses on restricted grazing, or horses that need tighter control of calorie intake and bodyweight. The key is not simply to "feed more", but to formulate a **balanced diet** that supports the **digestive system**, maintains **gut health**, and delivers enough **protein, fibre, key micronutrients**, and suitable **source of energy** for the horse's workload and condition.

Because grass normally contributes to a **diet based on forage**, removing it means the rest of the ration must be more carefully planned. The most important consideration is whether the horse needs maintenance, conditioning, or performance support. A good grass-free plan should aim for steady **feed balance**, stable **calorie intake**, and feed that is appropriate for the horse's **weight**, temperament, and digestive sensitivity.

Types of Horse Feed to Use Without Grass

There are **types of horse feed** that can be used in grassless feeding, but they are not the same. Some are designed to supply much of the daily ration, while others act as **supplementary feed** to back up a forage-heavy diet. Picking the right option depends on the amount of conserved forage the horse eats, how much energy it requires, and whether you want a reduced-starch or more energetic approach.

A **complete horse feed** is one of the best solutions when grass is absent. It is formulated to supply roughage, calories, nutrients, and vitamins and minerals in a one ration, although it still is generally most effective alongside hay or haylage. A complete feed can be beneficial for horses that have difficulty with chewing long fibre, older horses, or owners seeking a more straightforward feeding routine with less separate parts.

A **mixed feed** is a more general term for dietary blends mixed from grain ingredients, fibre sources, protein ingredients, and added mineral supplements. Some compound feeds are formulated for high performance, others for pleasure horses, and others for horses that hold weight easily. They can be useful where a horse needs more targeted support for conditioning or work, but the **nutritional specification** should always be examined closely.

Chaff is a further valuable part of grass-free feeding. It provides chew time, assists slow intake, and can improve palatability when mixed with other ingredients. Chaff is especially beneficial for horses that need a slower eating pace or a bit more volume without too much starch. It can also support saliva production, which is useful for digestive comfort.

Alternative frequent options consist of **balancer** feeds, which provide dense vitamins, minerals, and amino acids with minimal calories, and roughage-based feeds such as **fibre cubes**. In some horses, especially those on controlled diets, a balancer plus forage and a small amount of chaff may be adequate. In other cases, a more filling feed is needed. The best choice depends on training load, body condition, and the ration's overall nutrient density.

How to Create a Balanced Grass-Free Ration

Developing a grass-free ration starts with the basics: conserved forage first, then feed concentrates or balancers only as needed. Good **horse feeding rules** always place fibre at the centre of the diet, because the horse's gut is designed for almost constant consumption of roughage. Even without grass, the aim should be to maintain the digestive tract working steadily with regular fibre meals and sensible feed rate control.

A practical way to plan the ration is to use a **horse feeding chart** as a reference for bodyweight, condition, and workload. Charts are useful for broad planning, but they do not replace observation. Every horse has individual **daily requirements**, and those needs change with age, season, workload, and metabolism. A horse in light work may need far less concentrate than a horse in conditioning or active training.

A **horse feed calculator uk** tool can help work out the amount of feed and forage needed, especially when working out total energy and nutrient intake. It is a useful first step for assessing feed rate and identifying whether the horse is underfed, overfed, or receiving too much sugar and starch. However, calculator results should always be checked against the horse's body condition score and actual health.

Digestible fibre is especially important in grass-free feeding. Fibre is not just "bulk"; it is an important energy source for many horses and supports stable gut function. If the ration is based on hay, haylage, alfalfa, beet pulp, chaff, or fibre cubes, the horse can still receive adequate fuel without relying heavily on cereal-based feeds. This is often preferable for horses needing calmer behaviour, better digestive comfort, or lower starch intake.

A well-built ration should consider the following:

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- Conserved forage as the foundation of the diet
- Whether a complete horse feed is needed or a balancer will do
- The horse's bodyweight and body condition score
- Workload, conditioning goals, and daily requirements
- Protein quality, vitamins and minerals, and overall nutrient density
- The level of sugar and starch in the complete ration

The result should be a carefully balanced ration that promotes energy, muscle maintenance, and gut health without creating unnecessary digestive stress.

Beginner Horse Feed Guide: What You Need to Know

Horse feed for beginners should be simple, consistent, and suited for the horse's actual needs. Many new owners worry about choosing the "best" feed, but the first step is always getting to know the horse in front of you. A sound feeding plan is based on body condition score, workload, age, and the quality of available forage, not on packaging claims alone.

Reliable **horse feed advice uk** sources tend to stress the same core point: start with forage, then add feed only to fill gaps. If a horse is maintaining condition well on hay and a balancer, there may be no real need for a richer compound feed. If the horse is losing weight, lacking energy, or needs more support for work, then a richer feed may be appropriate.

Body condition score is one of the most useful tools for beginners. It helps you judge whether a horse is too thin, ideal, or carrying too much weight. In grass-free feeding, this is especially important because a horse's

calorie intake can rise quickly if feed choices are too rich. Routine scoring helps you adjust the ration before problems develop.

Feeding frequency also matters. Horses tend to do better with smaller, more frequent meals than with large concentrates in one go. This supports a steadier digestive system and can lower the risk of digestive upset. For some horses, three or more daily feedings are ideal; for others, two may be enough if the ration is mainly forage-based and the horse is not in hard work.

Beginners should remember that horse feed should match the horse, not the other way around. A calm cob, a poor-doing thoroughbred, and a veteran with dental issues may all need very different solutions. The safest approach is to make changes slowly and keep the ration predictable.

Reviewing Horse Feed Companies and Leading Brands

There are many **horse feed companies** supplying grass-free dietary options, and choosing a brand often comes down to the feed's function rather than the logo on the sack. The clearest comparison starts from the **ingredient list**. That list shows whether the feed is primarily fibre-led, cereal-based, high in oil, or designed as a balancer or complete ration.

As an example, **spillers horse feed** is widely known for having a broad range of products for different types of horses, from balancers and fibre feeds to condition and performance options. So it serves as a useful example of how a brand may provide various feeding routes rather than one universal answer. When comparing any brand, look at whether the feed is suitable as a main ration, a partial ration, or a supplement.

Its **nutritional specification** is far more important than marketing language. Check the stated levels of energy, protein, fibre, oil, starch, sugar, vitamins and minerals, and any added probiotics or prebiotics. These numbers tell you how the feed supports conditioning, recovery, and gut health. A feed with good palatability but poor nutritional balance may tempt the horse without meeting its daily requirements.

Brand comparisons should also consider the horse's feeding style. Some feeds are highly palatable but more energy-dense, while others are designed to be lower in starch and better suited to a controlled ration. Ask whether the product is intended for maintenance, weight gain, topline support, or improved fibre intake. That keeps the choice practical and aligned with the horse's needs.

How Many Does Horse Feed Cost?

Horse feed cost changes greatly depending on whether you are buying a balancer, a complete feed, a compound feed, or a specialist fibre product. When asking **how much does horse feed cost**, it is better to think in terms of day-to-day feeding rate and overall ration cost rather than bag price alone. A cheaper bag may not be economical if the horse needs a substantial amount each day.

Budgeting for grass-free feeding should include forage, concentrates, and any extras such as balancers or supplements. A horse on a simple ration of hay plus balancer may cost less to feed than a horse needing a rich compound feed, but the total depends on bodyweight, condition, and workload. Calculating cost per day gives a much clearer picture of what the ration really costs.

The **daily feeding rate** is especially useful for comparison. If one feed is fed at 1 kg a day and another at 4 kg a day, the lower bag [overweight horse feed](#) price may not be the cheaper option overall. It is also important to factor in wastage, storage, and whether the feed replaces part of the [low sugar balancer for horses](#) forage allowance or is only an addition.

For many horses, the most cost-effective ration is not the cheapest feed but the best match. A well-designed balanced ration can reduce waste, improve condition, and avoid overfeeding calories the horse does not need. That can save money in the long run and support better health.

Horse Feed Blend Recipe: When and How to Make One

A **horse feed mix recipe** can be practical when you want to mix a few simple ingredients into a practical grass-free ration. It is most relevant when you understand the horse's needs and want a custom mix based on roughage, body condition, and digestibility. For many horses, the core of the mix will be forage plus a **balancer**, with other ingredients added only if needed.

A simple mix might include **oats** for quicker energy, **fibre cubes** for digestible volume, and chaff to improve chew time and palatability. This can suit some horses in light or moderate work, especially when additional calories are needed. However, oats are higher in starch, so they are not suitable for every horse, particularly those needing a low-starch ration.

When making a mix, the aim is not to create the most complex recipe, but the most appropriate one. A fibre-led blend can often provide a better energy source for horses that need consistent fuel rather than a sharp release. If the horse already gets a good balancer and enough forage, the mix may only need a small amount of cereal or conditioning feed.

Use custom mixes cautiously. Every ingredient changes the overall nutrient density, sugar and starch profile, and feed rate. If in doubt, simplify the ration rather than complicate it. The best horse feed mix recipe is the one that supports body condition, appetite, and digestive stability without drifting away from the horse's real requirements.

Common Nourishment Mistakes to Avoid

One of the most common mistakes is neglecting the basic **horse feeding rules** and leaning too much on hard feed while failing to supply enough fibre. This can disturb the digestive system and raise the risk of poor gut function. A forage-led approach remains the most secure foundation, even when a horse is not on grass.

Sudden diet change is another major risk. Any change to forage, compound feed, balancer, or fibre feed should be introduced step by step. Horses need time to adjust to new ingredients and a different ration balance. Abrupt changes can disrupt appetite, manure quality, and overall comfort.

Colic is a real concern when feeding is poorly managed. While colic has many causes, unstable routines, too much starch, and low fibre intake can all lead to digestive stress. Consistent feeding frequency, plenty of digestible fibre, and careful transitions help reduce risk.

Starch should be watched closely, especially in horses that become excitable, reactive, or prone to digestive sensitivity. High-starch feeds can suit some working horses, but many do better with fibre-led nutrition and more measured energy release. Overdoing starch often leads to more problems than it solves.

Other mistakes include:

- Selecting feed that does not match the horse's body condition score
- Choosing a product without checking the ingredient list and nutritional specification
- Feeding too much too quickly instead of following sensible feed rate guidance
- Failing to assess forage quality when planning the ration

- Assuming all complete feeds are interchangeable

Good feeding is regular, carefully managed, and based on observation. That is the easiest route to better health and better results.

FAQ: Grass-Free Horse Feeding Questions

What horse feed is best for grass-free feeding?

The best horse feed depends on the horse's body condition, workload, and digestive sensitivity, but many horses do well on a fibre-led **complete horse feed** or a balancer plus forage. If the horse needs more calories, a compound feed or fibre-based conditioning feed may be more suitable. The ideal choice should support a balanced ration, good palatability, and stable gut health.

Can a horse to live completely on complete horse feed?

A few horses can be managed largely on complete horse feed, mainly if they also receive appropriate forage and the product is made to meet daily requirements. Still, most horses still thrive from some hay or haylage because fibre remains key to digestive function. A complete feed can be the principal concentrate, but it is not always a full substitute for long fibre.

How should I use a horse feed calculator UK tool?

A **horse feed calculator uk** tool is usually used by entering the horse's weight, training load, and sometimes body condition score. It then calculates feed and forage amounts and helps you decide whether the ration is too rich or too light. Use it as a guide, then adjust based on the horse's condition, appetite, and performance.

What should I feed my horse if it has no access to grass?

If a horse has no access to grass, feed it a forage-led ration built around hay, haylage, or another suitable forage replacement. Add a balancer, complete horse feed, or compound feed only as needed to meet daily requirements. The aim is to provide highly digestible fibre, vitamins and minerals, and the right energy source without too much starch.

What does horse feed cost per day?

Daily cost depends on the variety of horse feed, the feed rate, and how much forage the horse needs. A balancer-based diet may be reasonable in daily cost, while a performance compound feed or conditioning ration can be costlier. The most accurate way to judge horse feed cost is to calculate the full daily feeding rate, including forage and any supplementary feed.