

Choosing the best horse feed for a horse with laminitis is about more than finding a “healthy” bag on the shelf. The goal is to promote metabolic health, steady blood sugar, and a forage-first diet while keeping non-structural carbohydrates as low as practical. For many horses, that means focusing on low starch, low sugar options with controlled intake, detailed feed analysis, and ingredients that fit a laminitis diet.

Laminitis-prone horses often do best with careful equine nutrition planning rather than a high-energy, grain-heavy routine. Whether the horse is an easy keeper, has insulin resistance, or simply needs better weight management, the safest horse feed choices usually emphasize digestible fiber, fat-based calories, and a balanced ration built around hay and pasture management. The right product can help support digestive health without pushing blood sugar or adding unnecessary sugar and starch.

What Laminitis-sensitive Horses Need From Horse Feed

Founder is a uncomfortable inflammatory condition that can be aggravated by dietary excesses, especially when a horse consumes too much sugar and starch. That does not mean every horse feed has to be completely grain-free, but it does mean the feed should be chosen with the lowest risk profile possible. The most important concept is non-structural carbohydrates, often shortened to NSC. They are the rapidly available sugars and starches that can raise blood sugar and affect a horse with insulin resistance.

For a laminitis-prone horse, the best horse feed usually supports a forage-based plan. That means hay should make up the foundation of the daily ration, with pasture access limited when needed. Good forage provides fiber, helps maintain digestive health, and can reduce the need for large amounts [horse feed](#) of concentrated horse feed. A horse’s body condition score also matters. Horses that are overweight may need controlled intake and lower calorie density, while horses that are underweight may need added calories without added starch.

Look for horse feed that is clearly labeled low starch and low sugar. Feed analysis matters more than marketing claims. A safe feed for sensitive horses typically uses digestible fiber sources such as beet pulp, soybean hulls, or other fiber-based ingredients, along with fat-based calories from vegetable oils or stabilized rice bran. These can help with weight management without creating the spikes associated with high-NSC formulas.

A balanced ration should also include mineral supplementation when needed. Many horses do not get enough trace minerals, especially when the diet is mostly hay. A feed or balancer that helps cover vitamins and minerals can improve the overall program, but it should still fit the horse’s laminitis needs. When evaluating a daily ration, ask whether the horse is getting enough forage, whether pasture time is controlled, and whether the horse feed is truly appropriate for sensitive metabolism and blood sugar support.

Categories of Horse Feed and Feeds to Steer Clear Of

Many types exist of horse feed, and not all of them suit a laminitis-prone horse. Some feeds are designed for performance, some for weight gain, and some for ease of use. The goal is to distinguish safe feed from products that depend on sugar and starch for energy.

Sweet feed for horses is one of the most common choices to avoid in a laminitis diet. These mixes often contain molasses and higher levels of starch from grain ingredients. They may smell appealing and be easy to market, but they are not ideal for horses that need low NSC feeding. In many cases, sweet feed for horses can encourage rapid intake and provide more readily available carbohydrates than a sensitive horse should have.

Horse feed grain is another category that needs careful handling. Grain-based concentrates can be useful for some horses, especially those with high energy demands, but they are often too rich in sugar and starch for laminitis-prone horses. Corn, oats, and barley are common examples of ingredients that can elevate NSC. Some grain-free products are available, but grain-free does not automatically mean low sugar or safe. Always check the feed label and ingredient list, not just the front of the bag.

Generally, the best types of horse feed for sensitive horses are those built on fiber and fat rather than grain. That includes ration balancers, low-starch senior feeds, some pelleted maintenance feeds, and specialized metabolic formulas. The best option depends on the horse's body condition score, workload, forage quality, and any veterinary guidance related to laminitis or insulin resistance.

When in doubt, avoid feeds that list sugar-heavy ingredients early in the ingredient list, or that rely on high-starch feed technology to deliver energy. The safest feeding pattern is usually one that keeps the horse on controlled intake, uses forage as the foundation, and limits concentrated calories unless they come from digestible fiber and fat-based calories.

Leading Horse Feed Brands for Sensitive Horses

Many horse owners evaluate the leading feed brands by looking at product lines that are known for low starch and controlled energy. Brand reputation matters, but individual formulas matter even more. A company may offer one excellent low NSC product and another that is not ideal for laminitis-prone horses.

Purina is one of the most commonly searched brands, largely because the company offers a broad selection of feeds for different needs. Some Purina formulas are better suited to sensitive horses than others, so it is important to examine the specific feed analysis rather than assuming the whole line is safe. Nutrena horse feed is another major name with a variety of options, including feeds that may be useful for horses needing better metabolic health support. Tribute horse feed is also often discussed by owners looking for reduced starch, low sugar choices that fit a more careful laminitis diet.

The best horse feed brands for a laminitis-prone horse are the ones that clearly present their nutritional profile, support balanced ration planning, and make it easy to evaluate ingredients. Look for products that are transparent about NSC levels, calorie density, and mineral supplementation. If a feed is marketed for performance but does not fit low sugar needs, it may not prove the right match.

Purina, Tribute, and Nutrena Compared

Within these lines, some specific formulas come up frequently. Tribute horse feed is often selected by horse owners who want a carefully managed intake approach with more emphasis on fiber and less on starch-heavy energy. Depending on the formula, it may suit horses that need stable blood sugar support and digestive health protection.

Purina Impact performance feeds are another common comparison point. Purina impact horse feed and Purina impact performance formulas can be useful for horses with higher energy needs, but laminitis-prone horses require careful review to the feed label. A "performance" label does not automatically make the feed wrong, but it often signals a calorie source that may not be ideal unless the horse truly needs that level of energy.

Purina competition horse feed formulas should be checked carefully for sweetener and grain content, especially if the horse has metabolic sensitivity or a past of laminitis. Certain performance feeds contain greater easily digestible carbohydrates than a reactive horse should receive.

Nutrena also includes a range of products, some of which are designed for hard keepers, mature horses, or horses with specific metabolic requirements. The key point is to compare feed analysis, not brand prestige. A single Nutrena formula may be a good **horse food USA Bifid** fit for weight management and low NSC goals, while a different one may be too rich for a laminitis-prone horse.

The most effective method is to examine the individual product's ingredient breakdown, calorie density, and sugar and starch content. Product names assist with buying, but the feed label shows whether the product belongs in the horse's daily ration.

What About Triumph, Runnings, Tractor Supply, and Chewy?

Shopping keywords are important because many horse owners get feed through farm supply stores or online sources. Triumph horse feed is a brand name that comes up often when owners compare low-starch or specialty formulas. Like any brand, the safety of the product depends on the exact formula and whether it fits the horse's needs.

The Runnings brand horse feed and Tractor Supply horse feed are general shopping terms rather than individual formulas, which means you may find a wide variety of products on the shelf. Tractor Supply Co. sweet feed is especially important to mention because sweet feed for horses is generally not the first choice for laminitis-prone horses. Even if the bag is handy or well-known, the added syrup and grain content can make it a poor fit.

Chewy horse feed is also frequent query for owners who want home delivery. This can be handy for comparison shopping, but the very same rule applies: read the feed analysis, ingredient list, and guaranteed values closely. A convenient order does not make a feed safe.

Whether the feed is sourced from a local farm retailer or an online supplier, the best practice is to focus on low NSC, low sugar, and clear labeling. A horse feed that seems simple to purchase is not necessarily safe for laminitis, so the ingredients should always drive the selection.

How Much Horse Feed to Give a Laminitis-Prone Horse

How much horse feed to give depends on condition score, forage supply, workload, and health status. A horse feeding chart can be a helpful guide, but it should not replace a custom feeding plan. For laminitis-prone horses, the most common mistake is often overfeeding concentrated horse feed while underestimating how much energy comes from forage and pasture.

If the horse maintains weight easily, the daily ration may be quite small or limited to a ration balancer plus hay. If the horse is thin or has higher energy needs, the feed amount can be adjusted, but it should still stay within a starch-controlled plan. The question "how much grain to feed a horse per day" becomes less relevant for many laminitis-prone horses because grain may not be the right energy source at all.

Start by checking body condition score. If the horse is overweight, controlled intake and tighter pasture management are often needed. If the horse is lean, add calories through digestible fiber and energy from fat before increasing starch. For many sensitive horses, the right answer is more high-quality forage and less concentrated feed.

A horse feeding chart can help estimate baseline needs, but laminitis history alters the formula. In practice, the goal is to provide enough nutrients without overloading the horse with sugar and starch. That often means multiple small meals, slow changes, and careful monitoring of hoof comfort, energy level, and weight trend.

Top Horse Feed for Weight Gain Without Excess Sugar

The top horse feed to help with weight gain in a laminitis-prone horse is not usually a traditional rich grain mix. Instead, it often relies on digestible fiber and fat-based calories. These sources provide energy with a lower glycemic impact, which supports blood sugar stability and may be better for horses with insulin resistance or metabolic concerns.

Digestible fiber can come from ingredients such as beet pulp, soy hulls, or similar fiber-rich sources. These ingredients support digestive health and help increase calorie intake without pushing the horse toward a high-starch feeding pattern. Fat-based calories from vegetable oil or stabilized fat sources can also improve calorie density without the same risk level as grain.

This is especially important when the horse needs weight gain but must remain on a safe feed plan. In those cases, the ideal horse feed for weight gain is often a low starch, low sugar ration with added calories from fiber and fat, not from molasses or cereal grains. That strategy helps protect metabolic health while still improving condition.

Always remember that a horse that is losing weight may need more than just feed changes. Dental care, parasite control, forage quality, and overall digestive health all matter. But when horse feed is part of the solution, choosing a formula with digestible fiber and controlled calorie density is usually safer than using a rich grain product.

Horse Feed Cost: What to Expect and How to Compare

Horse feed cost varies widely based on brand, formula, ingredient quality, and package size. Low starch specialty rations often cost more per bag than basic sweet feed for horses, but the real comparison should go beyond sticker price. For a laminitis-prone horse, the cheapest bag can become expensive if it worsens the horse's condition or does not support metabolic health.

A horse feed cost calculator can aid work out monthly expenses by factoring in daily feeding rate, bag weight, and price per bag. It is helpful since a more concentrated feed may look expensive at first, but if the feeding rate is low, the actual monthly cost may be affordable. On the other hand, a cheaper feed may need a larger amount per day and still not provide the right nutrition.

When reviewing options, check price per bag, the feeding guidelines, and the actual amount needed to meet the horse's daily ration. You should also consider whether the feed substitutes for other supplements or requires extra mineral supplementation. A balanced ration can reduce the need to buy several products.

If you are comparing Purina horse feed, Nutrena horse feed, Tribute horse feed, or store options from Tractor Supply horse feed, Runnings horse feed, or Chewy horse feed, the greatest value is the one that matches the horse's feeding objectives. Cost matters, but so does safety. A carefully selected low NSC feed that supports weight maintenance and digestive well-being is often worth more than a cheaper high-starch product that is a poor fit.

Feeding Guidelines, Treats, and Safe Add-Ons

Giving horses carrots can be fine in moderation for many horses, but laminitis-prone horses need restricted intake. Carrots contain natural sugar, so they should be treated as an occasional treat rather than a staple. Modest portions are usually easier to fit into a safe feeding plan than sugary snacks or large treats.

Fiber-rich feed should remain the cornerstone of the diet. Good hay is often more essential than any bagged horse feed because it provides the bulk of calories and fiber. Pasture access may need to be limited, especially

during periods of lush growth when sugar levels can rise. Controlled turnout and forage testing can both help with diet management.

Supplements can also play a role, but they should be chosen carefully. Some horses benefit from mineral supplementation, especially if the base ration is mostly hay and a low-volume feed. Others may need support for metabolic health, digestive health, or balanced ration planning. Supplements should support the diet, not mask poor feed choices.

A simple, safe approach often works best: forage-first, a low sugar feed if needed, careful treat choices, and regular body condition score checks. That routine helps reduce the risk of feeding mistakes that could trigger a laminitis flare.

Worst Horse Feed Choices for Laminitis-Prone Horses

The worst horse feed brands are not always a single list of names; often, the bigger issue is the type of product. High-starch feed, sweet feed for horses, and feeds built around molasses are usually poor choices for laminitis-prone horses. These products can deliver too much sugar and starch too quickly, which may work against blood sugar control and metabolic health.

Molasses is a major ingredient to watch. It improves palatability, but it also increases sugar content. For a horse with a laminitis history, that is a concern. Likewise, grain-heavy products that lean on horse feed grain for energy may be inappropriate unless a veterinarian or equine nutrition professional has determined that the horse can safely handle them.

Another error is assuming a bag is safe because it is labeled for vitality, gloss, or performance. Some products marketed as the best horse feed brands for performance horses are not the same as the best horse feed brands for sensitive horses. A horse with laminitis needs controlled intake, a low NSC approach, and a feed label that backs those goals.

In short, do not use feeds that are loaded in molasses, heavy on grain, or clearly designed for maximal calorie delivery without regard to sugar and starch. A careful look at the ingredient list and feed analysis can help you avoid the worst horse feed brands for a sensitive horse.

FAQ: Horse Feed for Laminitis-Prone Horses

What is the best horse feed for laminitis-prone horses?

The best horse feed for laminitis-prone horses is usually starch-light, sugar-conscious, and built around digestible fiber and fat-based calories. A forage-first plan with hay as the foundation is often safest, and the feed should support portion control, metabolic health, and a balanced ration. The exact choice depends on the horse's body condition score, workload, and any insulin resistance concerns.

Should laminitis-prone horses eat grain or sweet feed?

Usually, no. Grain and sweet feed for horses often contain higher amounts of sugar and starch than a sensitive horse should have. Many laminitis-prone horses do better with grain-free or low NSC alternatives that rely on fiber and fat instead of high-starch feed ingredients. Always check the feed label and ingredient list before buying.

How much horse feed should a laminitis-prone horse get per day?

The amount depends on body condition score, forage quality, and whether the horse needs weight gain, maintenance, or weight management. A horse feeding chart can help as a starting point, but the daily ration should be adjusted to keep the horse safe. In many cases, the main emphasis should be on forage, with only enough horse feed to meet nutritional gaps.

Can laminitis-prone horses eat carrots or other treats?

Yes, but only in moderation. Feeding horses carrots can fit into a safe plan if the amount is small and treats are not a major source of sugar. Because carrots contain natural sugar, they should be limited for horses with laminitis or insulin resistance. Low-sugar treats or a few small carrot pieces are usually safer than frequent sugary snacks.

How do I compare horse feed expenses for low-starch choices?

Use a horse feed cost calculator, review price per bag, and look at how much the horse actually needs per day. A low starch feed may be priced more per bag but less per feeding rate if it is more nutritious. Also check whether the feed replaces other products, such as mineral supplementation, so you can calculate the real monthly cost instead of only the shelf price.