

# Feeding Veterans

## The Barley and Molasses Free Range

### Choosing a veteran feed

Correct feeding to meet the changing nutritional requirements of our older horses is vital but it is also important to feed according to the horse's individual needs. Ponies in particular tend to age more slowly than horses, but their previous lifestyle and work load will also affect when they start to look, feel and act their age.

#### Low energy/calorie

#### Low energy/calorie

#### Higher energy/calorie



- High Fibre - 26.0%
- Low energy - DE 8.0 MJ/kg - ideal for maintenance
- Balanced with essential vitamins and minerals
- For horses and ponies in rest/light work
- Can be fed as a partial or complete hay replacer



- High Fibre - 24.0%
- Low energy - DE 8.0 MJ/kg - ideal for maintenance
- Good doers who need a low calorie feed
- Balanced with essential vitamins and minerals
- For horses and ponies in rest/light work



- High Fibre - 16.0%
- Low energy - DE 11.0 MJ/kg
- Slow release energy from fibre and oil
- Highly palatable
- Balanced with essential vitamins and minerals
- For horses and ponies in light to medium work

Providing illness or unsoundness isn't a problem, keeping horses fit and active in their later years is highly beneficial for all round health and well-being. It is important that a veteran horse's diet reflects his energy requirements for both maintaining weight and providing fuel for work, whether that be light hacking or competing regularly.

It is well recognised that as horses age the efficiency of their digestive systems declines and the absorption of nutrients into the bloodstream is reduced. This means older horses are more likely to lose weight and a change to a more nutrient dense and higher calorie feed such as Veteran Vitality, may be required. However this is not true for all older horses, some will remain good doers for their entire lives and feeding a high calorie feed may simply lead to unwanted weight gain. Keeping a good doer at an ideal weight and body condition score is essential to avoid placing additional strains on the horse's body and joints.

Veteran Light has been specifically designed to provide older horses and ponies showing no signs of unwanted weight loss with all the benefits of a specific veteran feed, without the additional calories.

Regardless of your horse's calorie needs, a good veteran feed will be one that is high in fibre and low in starch and sugar as this is more natural for the horse. Feeds which contain a high proportion of cereals should be avoided as these have significantly higher starch contents than Veteran Vitality, Veteran Light and Fast Fibre which use fibre and oil as energy sources. A high starch diet can not only cause fizzy and excitable behaviour, but it is also more difficult to digest and can make the horse more susceptible to developing laminitis or colic.

Additionally, the inclusion of pre and probiotics in veteran feeds can help improve the health and function of the digestive system, allowing older horses to gain the maximum available nutrition from their diet.

## Common veteran health issues

Sadly with advancing age comes the increased likelihood of medical issues, many of which can be exacerbated by the horse's diet. For instance, whilst an increase in the protein content of the diet is beneficial for some veteran horses to help them maintain a good body condition, any horse with liver or kidney problems will require a low protein diet, e.g. Fast Fibre, in order to reduce the strain placed on the already damaged organs.

Horses and ponies with a history of laminitis and those at increased risk of developing the disease due to conditions such as Cushing's Disease and Insulin Resistance should only be fed feeds like Fast Fibre and Veteran Light, that are very low in starch and sugar (ideally below 10% combined). It is essential that all veterinary issues are taken into account when choosing suitable feeds to ensure that the diet is suitable for the horse as a whole and not just in relation to his age.

- Intolerances
- Gastric Ulcers
- Mobility
- Laminitis
- Dental Problems
- Insulin Resistance
- Cushings Disease



This is Kelly Coe Joe, a 21 year old Shetland. He has a number of health problems including laminitis, missing teeth and COPD during winter months. He is fed a combination of Fast Fibre, as a partial hay replacement, and Veteran Light to maintain a healthy condition and give him

the right amount of energy to make his way round the paradise grazing system. - Lily Morton

## Fibre First

Fibre is the most important part of every horse's diet, regardless of their age. In the wild, horses graze for 18 to 20 hours a day and to mimic this need to 'trickle feed', our domesticated horses should ideally have fibre in the form of grass, hay or haylage available at all times. Fibre is not only essential for good digestive health, its digestion also provides a good source of calories and body heat as it is fermented in the gut. If a horse is not eating enough fibre, he will lose weight, regardless of how much high calorie 'bucket' feed he may also be fed. Unfortunately, as horses age their dental condition declines which can make chewing hay and grazing difficult; it is then necessary to provide alternative sources of fibre that are easier to eat. Fast Fibre is a soaked high fibre feed that can be fed as a complete or partial hay replacer.

## Added Water

A veteran horse with poor teeth is more at risk of suffering choke and colic, simply because he is not able to chew properly. A concentrate feed that soaks with water to form a soft, palatable mash is often relished by veterans regardless of the number of teeth they have! Soaking using warm water also releases more flavours from the feed, helping to tempt even the fussiest of feeders and those that have a tendency to go off their feed. Veteran horses can be reluctant to drink enough water, particularly in the winter, but feeding a soaked concentrate feed or hay replacer can significantly increase their water intake, which helps to keep the digestive system hydrated and able to function efficiently.

For further information, contact our award winning Nutrition Team:

T 01362 822 902  
E [helpline@allenandpage.co.uk](mailto:helpline@allenandpage.co.uk)  
W [www.allenandpage.com](http://www.allenandpage.com)